



Program Testing Policy

APPLIES TO: PA Program Faculty and Students

DATE OF REVISION: 2/19/25

BACKGROUND: To ensure integrity of all program assessments, to uphold PAEA testing requirements and ARC-PA Standard A2.05 that states: *Principal faculty and the program director must be responsible for, and actively participate in the processes of (d) evaluating student performance*, and ARC-PA Standard A3.02 that states: *The program must define, publish, make readily available and consistently apply its policies and practices to all students*, and ARC-PA Standard 84.01 that states: *The program must conduct frequent, objective and documented evaluations of student performance in meeting the program's learning outcomes and instructional objectives for both didactic and supervised clinical practice experience components. The evaluations must:*

- a) *align with what is expected and taught and*
- b) *allow the program to identify and address any student deficiencies in a timely manner.*

DEFINITIONS: Program Assessments: any quiz, test, exam (including mid-term and final examinations).

PURPOSE: To prevent the compromise of program assessments, to ensure integrity in all testing areas, to maintain academic excellence, and to ensure that the CMU PA program is compliant with standards A2.05, A3.02(d), and 84.01, and compliant with the University Policy on Academic Integrity, there will be a policy regarding acceptable practices for both in-person and remote assessment/testing of students.

POLICY: All CMU PA Instructional Faculty and staff will adhere to best testing practices to ensure compliance with ARC-PA Standards and CMU Graduate Academic Integrity Policies as well as Student Disability Services (SOS) policies, by following the CMU PA Program Testing Policy and Procedure

PROCEDURE: In-Person Exams

1. To ensure consistent application of testing policies and procedures to all students, CMU PA faculty and students will adhere to the following testing guidelines:
 - a. Tardiness for an exam, defined as an arrival of five or more minutes after the start of the exam, is considered a failure to notify the instructor or proctor properly and results in a 0% grade for the exam. Students are encouraged to arrive at the testing facility 30 minutes before the start of the exam to avoid tardiness. If tardiness is due to emergency or unforeseen circumstances, and the student has notified the course instructor as soon as possible, the Program



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Director and/or course instructor have discretion to allow student an alternative time/place (as soon as possible) to take the assessment. Care should be taken not to disrupt students who are already testing.

- b. Students will refrain from talking, loud noises, or other unprofessional distractions during the examination.
 - c. No backpacks, books, notebooks, cell phones, smart watches, electronic devices other than those required to complete exams, or other materials are allowed at your test station (*unless preapproved by the instructor -ie covered water bottle*).
 - d. No writing down or photographing test questions.
 - e. Students are encouraged to use the restroom prior to the exam and during scheduled breaks. If there is an emergency during testing, students must notify the instructor before leaving. Testing time is not extended for restroom usage.
 - f. Asking questions relating to a test question(s) is not allowed during the examination unless it concerns formatting issues or typographical errors.
 - g. Students may be randomly assigned to seats before the examination at the instructor's discretion.
 - h. All requests for make-up exams (that have been pre-approved by the instructor due to illness, etc) should be submitted in writing (email) within two (2) days of the original exam along with supporting documentation (i.e., treating healthcare provider note). If allowed, the date and time of the makeup exam is determined by the Instructor of Record. *Note: students unable to take assessments/exams at the scheduled time due to illness must provide treating provider documentation.*
2. Students with Accommodations from Student Disability Services-
- a. Students who have been granted reasonable testing accommodations through the Student Disability Services (SOS) office must send a current letter of accommodation to all course instructors at least 4 business days prior to the first course exam (preferably students will send this at the beginning of each semester to all instructors).
 - b. Students may alert course instructors of their intent to use testing accommodations on every assessment (all quizzes, exams etc.) *once* at the beginning of the semester, *or* students may opt to utilize accommodations intermittently (based on provisions of SOS office letter which states "the student may choose whether to or not to use any given accommodation, but accommodations are not retroactive."). If the student opts not to notify the instructor at the beginning of every semester for all assessments, they must notify the instructor at least 4 business days prior to any assessment they plan to use their accommodations.
 - c. It is the responsibility of the Instructor of Record for each course to ensure that in-person testing has an exam proctor arranged to ensure the integrity of testing



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for students who have approved SDS testing accommodations, as well as for those who do not have testing accommodations (*in the main classroom*). This may (*and usually will*) require the Instructor of Record to enlist a faculty or staff member to help proctor their exam.

- d. The "Students with Testing Accommodations" form should be completed based on student requests to utilize testing accommodations, by the instructor of record and provided to exam proctors 2-3 days prior to a scheduled exam. It is the course instructor's responsibility to ensure there is a proctor scheduled/present in all testing rooms, *at all times*, for the duration of the examination being administered. This includes requesting assistance from other faculty and staff as needed to meet proctoring requirements for all testing areas (ie- a back-up faculty or staff member may be available via text request for bathroom break, etc).
- e. Students with testing accommodations should return to the main classroom for the ExamSoft exam review after the assessment.

3. Remote Proctoring Policy/Procedure

- a. Students who are participating in remote testing should (a) find a quiet room that allows them to be comfortable and undisturbed, (b) use earplugs to reduce distractions, if necessary, and (c) inform roommates and/or family members of the testing time and duration.
- b. All students that require remote assessment are proctored remotely during the assessment using a video-conferencing platform (ie, *Teams*) hosted by the proctor.
- c. Prior to the start of the assessment, the student joins the video-conferencing session using a separate device (ie, phone) with the link provided. The student must activate their audio and video feed so they can be observed at their remote location during the assessment and delayed review, if offered.
- d. Students receive the exam password, delayed review password, and any additional instructions by the proctor before the start of the assessment.
- e. Communication between the student and proctor during the exam should be conducted through the Teams "chat" feature. The cell phone number of the Instructor of Record is also made available for remote exams. Students should keep this readily available in case of technical or other issues.
- f. All testing policies and procedures outlined in the Policy for Testing Behavior for In-Person Exams remain in place.
- g. Student Violations of this policy results in a referral to the PA Program Student Progress Committee for action which may include a disciplinary warning, disciplinary probation, or program dismissal.



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4. All examinations and assessments (quizzes, grading rubrics, etc) will be housed in ExamSoft:
 - a. The sponsoring institution provides the PA program with funds in the(?) budget to purchase an ExamSoft subscription. ExamSoft is an advanced assessment platform that allows faculty to organize and deliver student assessments efficiently. ExamSoft also allows faculty to analyze student performance more effectively, facilitating data-driven curricula and program changes.
 - b. All assessments should be posted and available for students to download at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled exam (*48 hours is preferable*).
 - c. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that their completed exam has properly uploaded prior to leaving the examination area. (*Faculty may need to confirm this if student is unsure.*)
 - d.
5. All exam questions should be mapped by faculty member creating exam
 - a. **ExamSoft Coding Instructions for Faculty.** The PA program uses ExamSoft to track student and program performance according to (a) NCCPA medical content topics, (b) NCCPA task areas, (c) PA Program Goals, and (d) PA Program Competencies and Learning Outcomes. All PA faculty are expected to code their questions in ExamSoft according to these categories. The following are instructions for coding:
 - i. Coding should be based on the correct answer (not the distractors in the question).
 - ii. Questions should be coded to the most specific category possible for NCCPA medical content topics.
 1. Example: Cardiovascular Acute myocardial infarction non-ST segment elevation
 - iii. Questions should be coded to the first level of the NCCPA task areas, at a minimum (i.e., History Taking and Performing Physical Examination; Using Diagnostic and Laboratory Studies; Formulating Most Likely Diagnosis; Managing Patients-Health Maintenance, Patient Education, and Preventive Measures; Managing Patients-Clinical Intervention; Managing Patients-Pharmaceutical Therapeutics; Applying Basic Scientific Concepts; Professional Practice).
 - iv. Faculty should code to a more specific level based on course content, if applicable.
 1. Example: In H/P, it is helpful to code more specifically within Professional Practice: Professional Practice Medical Informatics Skill in Demonstrating Appropriate Medical Documentation.
 - v. If a question could be coded to multiple sub-categories, it is up to the individual faculty to decide if more specific coding is indicated.



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1. Example: A question that provides history and physical examination findings and asks students to determine the most likely diagnosis could be coded as follows:
 - a. Coding Example #1 (more specific coding):
 - b. Formulating Most Likely Diagnosis
 - i. Knowledge of Significance of history as it relates to the differential diagnosis
 - ii. Knowledge of Significance of physical examination findings as they relate to diagnosis
 - iii. Skill in Selecting the most likely diagnosis in light of presented data
 - iv. Skill in Incorporating history, physical examination findings, and diagnostic data into medical decision-making
 - c. History Taking and Performing Physical Examination
 - i. Knowledge of Pertinent historical information
 - ii. Knowledge of Significant physical examination findings
 - iii. Knowledge of Signs and symptoms of significant medical conditions
 - d. Coding Example #2 (less specific coding)
 - i. Formulating Most Likely Diagnosis
 - ii. History Taking and Performing Physical Examination
 - b. Questions should be coded to one of the six PAS Program Competency Domains, at a minimum. Faculty are encouraged to code to one or more Program Learning Outcomes within each Competency Domain.
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6. Didactic Exam Review Policy and Procedure - Students are given the opportunity to have a supervised post-exam review scheduled *at the discretion of the Instructor of Record*.
 - a. Procedure:
 - i. Faculty enable the "Display Score on Exit" feature in ExamSoft, which allows students to see their exam scores immediately upon completion of the exam. The immediate score release feature is intended to supplement the delayed review, not replace it. Students are still strongly recommended to attend the delayed review to review any incorrect questions from the exam. This is a valuable form of feedback and allows an opportunity for self-directed learning, as students can identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement. (Some students may be



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- required, as part of their individualized learning plan, to be present for any exam reviews).
- ii. Students should be aware that the immediate score does not include grades for short answer/essay questions and may not reflect the final exam score, as faculty may adjust questions after reviewing student performance.
- b. Delayed review in ExamSoft is scheduled at the discretion of the Instructor of Record using the following guidelines:
- i. Only the most recent exam can be reviewed. Students are not allowed to review previous exams from earlier in the semester.
 - ii. Students are only allowed to review incorrect responses from the exam.
 - iii. All exam reviews are supervised by a faculty or a staff member.
 - iv. PA program faculty will not address specific questions during the exam review.
 - v. Cell phones, cameras, notes, lecture material, backpacks, and any other item, per the discretion of the faculty/staff member, are not allowed during the exam review.
 - vi. Students are not allowed to photograph or copy any exam questions for any purpose.
 - vii. Violations of this policy result in a referral to the PA Program Student Progress Committee for action which may include a disciplinary warning, disciplinary probation, or program dismissal.
- c. Additional exam review with the Instructor of Record during office hours, etc. should be minimized to maintain exam integrity whenever possible but is conducted at the discretion of the Instructor of Record.
7. Didactic Test Question Dispute Policy/Procedure
- a. If a student wants to dispute a test question, the dispute must be submitted in writing to the faculty within 24 hours of the exam review session. The dispute may only reference lecture materials, required or recommended texts, and appropriate medical peer-reviewed articles/websites. Sources must be included with the written dispute.
 - b. The faculty member will respond within 48 hours (not including weekends) in writing.
 - c. In the event of any dispute, the faculty member reserves the right to adjust the score as they deem appropriate.
 - d. If the student is unsatisfied with the faculty member's response, they are referred to the PA Student Academic Grievance Procedure.
8. Clinical Year Assessments (PAEA End of Rotation Exams and End of Curriculum Exam)



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- a. All policies related to student timeliness and testing behavior apply to clinical year assessments. (See Procedure for In-Person Exams Ia)
- b. All End of Rotation Exams and End of Curriculum Exam are administered on the PAEA testing platform. Students should ensure that all appropriate platform updates are completed prior to testing days and that device is appropriate for testing.
- c. Exam Scores will be released at the discretion of the Clinical Faculty or Program director and typically will be released within 24 hours of the examination.

Approved by Program Faculty Committee on February 19, 2025

Kathleen A Flannery, PA-C

2/19/2025

Signature

Date

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