

# WHAT GOES INTO MAKING AN NBME® ASSESSMENT

**NBME assessments** are the result of a collaborative and thoughtful process that prioritizes quality, fairness, accuracy and alignment with the exam's intended purpose. Before embarking, we ask: What skills, knowledge or abilities are we measuring? And, how are they relevant to health care practice today? Only once we've answered these questions—from an array of invested perspectives—can we begin. Here's a look at what the next steps typically entail.

**First**, NBME psychometricians, measurement scientists and test development experts work closely with subject matter experts to blueprint an exam, or define what it will measure and the inference that can be made about the learner and their performance. An evidence-centered design is the key to validity in assessments.

**Next up:** Our test development committees, which are made up of a diverse network of more than 400 carefully selected experts, including medical school faculty, physicians and health professionals from different specialties and institutions across the country. Committee members are assigned to write a set of questions based on their area of expertise.

Accurately assessing a specific construct can be challenging, so NBME's test development experts train committee members in the techniques involved in writing effective test questions. During the creation process, test development experts also ensure best writing practices are upheld.

**Then**, the committees review, refine and approve each question. This part may unfold over multiple rounds, as committee members consider whether a question is relevant, clear and effectively and fairly measures the intended knowledge or skills.

**Approved questions** are incorporated, unscored, onto exam forms so that NBME's psychometricians and data analysts can determine if the questions are measuring what they intend. Reviewing performance data helps ensure questions aren't unexpectedly too hard or too easy and that they help distinguish between different levels of understanding.

**Using questions** with good data, individual scorable exam forms are created so each is of similar difficulty to ensure fairness, reliability and validity. After taking an assessment, examinees receive a score or outcome report and performance feedback that can support learning and provide trusted information for next steps in learning or advancement.

**NBME's** psychometricians use statistical techniques to help ensure scores and outcomes can be compared fairly across different test forms and testing dates, while also tracking any changes in the performance of the test questions to help maintain quality exam content. In addition, subject matter experts regularly review questions to ensure they remain current, accurate and aligned with guidelines and best practices.



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