



NATIONAL BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN OPTOMETRY

California Board of Optometry Practice and Education Committee June 26, 2020

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Brooke Houck, PhD**

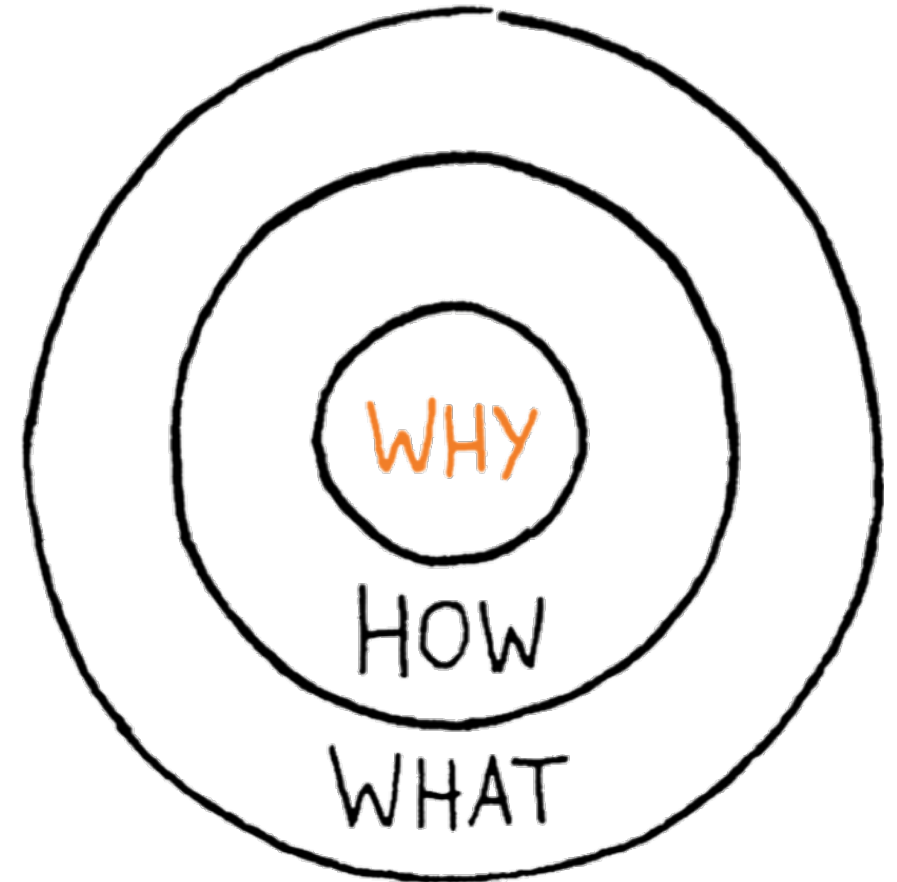


Mission Statement

To *serve the **public*** and the profession of optometry by developing, administering, scoring, and reporting results of valid examinations that assess competence.

Statement of Examinations Purpose: Our “Why”

The overall purpose of NBEO exams is to **protect the public** as it relates to practitioners seeking licensure and to ensure that those who are granted a license possess the knowledge, clinical thinking, and skills necessary for entry into the *independent* practice of optometry.



How do we achieve our purpose?

- *Differentiating those who **do** have the necessary expertise from those who do **not** at the level of the **Minimally Qualified Candidate (MQC)**.*
- *NBEO examinations **must be sufficiently demanding and rigorous to meet the “good faith” expectations of public protection in those being licensed.***



Participation in NBEO Examination Process



16 Full Time Staff



~30 Part Time Standardized Patients



82 Remote Examiners



14 In-House Examiners



56 Development Committee Members



37 Council Members

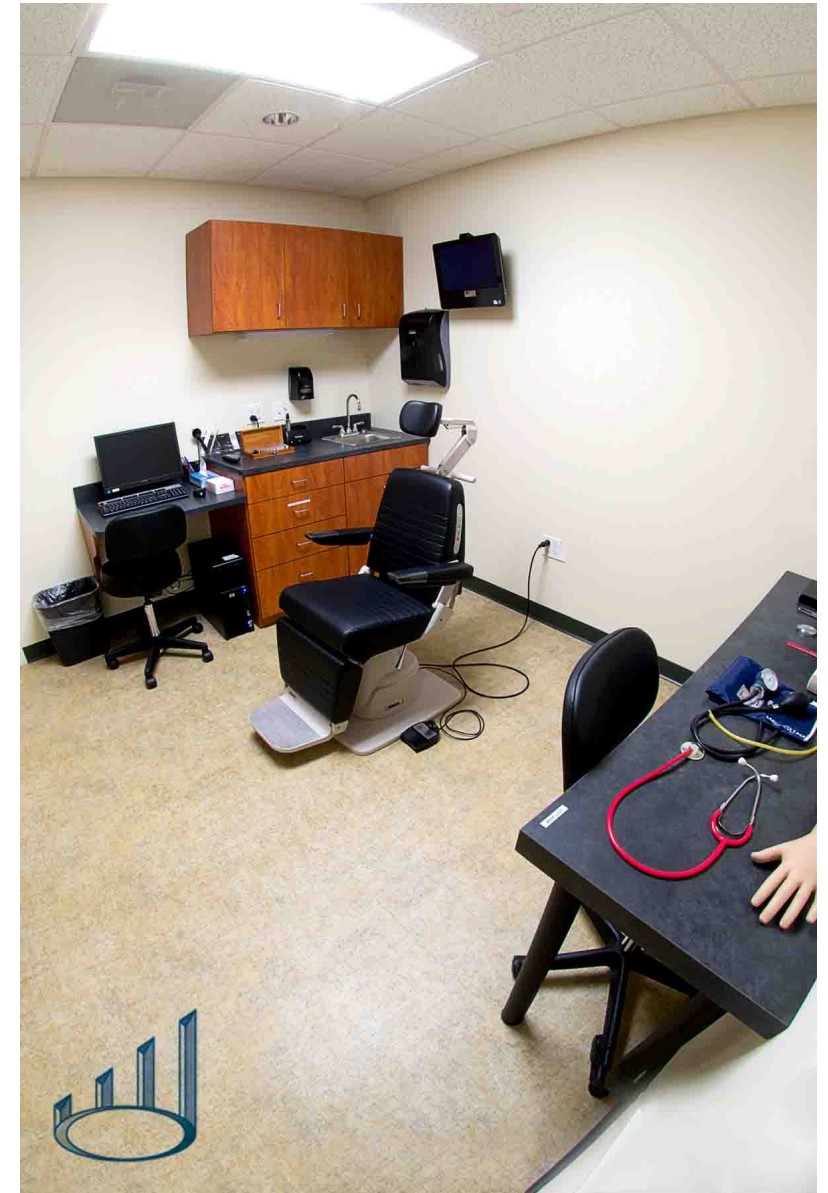


National Center of Clinical Testing in Optometry

Charlotte, North Carolina

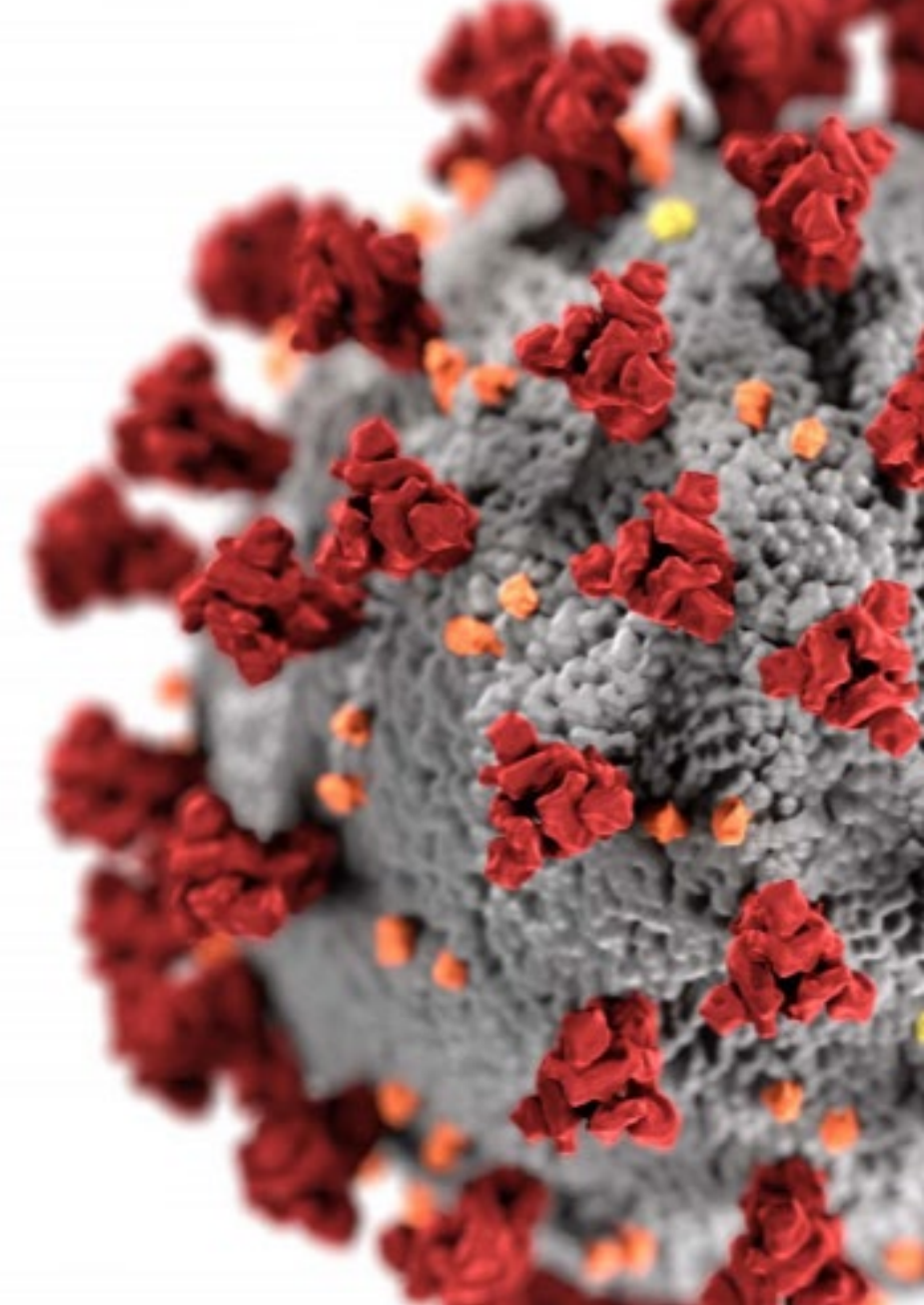


National Center of Clinical Testing in Optometry (NCCTO)



COVID-19

The world has changed.



Mid-March 2020: our nation began closing

National Center of Clinical Testing in Optometry

- Temporary testing suspension (began March 17)

Pearson VUE testing center closures

- March Part I ABS cancelled
- April Part II PAM/TMOD cancelled

NCCTO: BALANCING SAFETY AND FULFILLING OUR MISSION

Commitment to test candidates so that jurisdictional boards can make licensure decisions

VS.

Need to keep candidates and staff safe



REOPENED MAY 18, 2020



NCCTO: TESTING SCHEDULE

- ~250 candidates in need of rescheduling
- Reopened May 18 through June 25
- Provided over 300 appointment times (evenings, weekends)

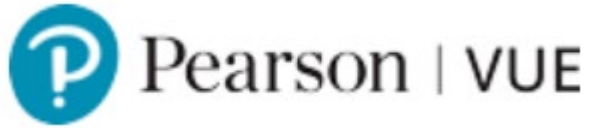
Opportunity for everyone in Class of 2020 to complete Part III CSE and ISE

Relaxed rescheduling rules: No penalty for candidates to reschedule if prefer

LONG-TERM CONSIDERATIONS AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING/SECOND-WAVE SHUTDOWN

- Protocol documentation for future crisis scenarios
- Breaks built into schedule throughout the year to accommodate issues that arise with more flexibility
- Standardized Patient recruitment
- Second shift staff for all key NCCTO positions
- Ability to quickly add evening/weekend testing sessions if necessary

NBEO Part I ABS and Part II PAM/TMOD



Rescheduling Challenges:

- Reopened with social distancing 50% capacity rules in place (15 seat centers are now 8 seat centers, 30 seat centers are now 15 seat centers)
- Pent up demand from all clients
- Staffing challenges (50% through targets; already hired 400 staff members and still hiring/training/onboarding)
- Staff shortages = unopen centers
- Regulations in specific geographic areas that complicate operations

NBEO Actions Steps

- Daily Communications with Pearson VUE team
- Worked with Pearson VUE capacity team to identify examination windows that could be used for Part I ABS and Part II PAM/TMOD candidates
- Expanded testing window (3 weeks in July-Aug and 3 weeks in November)
- Utilization of 10 temporary testing center locations that are functioning as Pearson Professional Centers

NBEO Actions Steps

- Authorization from Pennsylvania Governor's Office for NBEO candidates to test in Pennsylvania county Pearson Professional Centers
- Security plan developed with assistance of Caveon and implemented with Pearson VUE considering longer testing windows
- Candidate Escalation Form and communications with Pearson VUE regarding issues
- NBEO full Board of Directors has met with Pearson VUE leadership

Pearson VUE Continued Actions

- Increased business hours in as many locations as possible (24 hour centers, open 6am)
- Increased operational days in as many locations as possible (weekends: Saturday and Sunday testing)
- Hiring staff = opening more centers
- Temporary Testing Centers
- Active conversion of lower-stakes clients to On-VUE

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

External

- **Multiple emails to impacted candidates**
- **All updates posted to our website**
- **Multiple communications through our stakeholder groups (ARBO, ASCO, AOSA, Deans and Presidents)**

Internal

- **Training to Staff, Standardized Patients, Examiners**



NBEO Continual Steps

- Build Trust
- Create Transparency (as possible)
- Maintain Integrity

Alternative Testing Considerations in Response to COVID-19

Brooke Houck, PhD

Computer-Based Tests (ABS, PAM, and TMOD) Alternative Delivery Methods Considered

1. Remote proctoring
2. Paper and pencil testing
3. Utilization of the Schools and Colleges of Optometry to administer the examination in a Computer-Based format

Remote Proctoring

- We are watching this technology closely as it develops further.
- At this time, does not offer enough test security.

Paper & Pencil Testing

- The protocols for maintaining test integrity take time to establish.
- A paper form of these tests would take at least a year to put into place.

Computer-Based Testing at the Schools

- Different experiences at different schools.
- Extensive time delay to switching test files from PearsonVUE format to another format.

Standardization

- Concerns about fairness and bias are associated with any test administration method that significantly reduces standardization.
- Standardization is what makes a test reliable and fair.
- We are in an IMPERFECT situation given the global pandemic, but we are working hard to maintain the standardization and security of our exams, thus maintaining the validity and reliability of the exams.

Key Points

- Changing our test delivery method (to any other format than at PearsonVUE Professional Centers) will take time to ensure the test remains psychometrically sound.
- NBEO is engaging in **ongoing** research into alternative test delivery methods.
 - While these alternative delivery methods will not alleviate test scheduling issues now, we are continuing our research to build future contingency plans.

One-Site: National Center for Clinical Testing in Optometry

Brooke Houck, PhD

TEST ADMINISTERED AT THE SCHOOLS

- Prior to the opening of the NCCTO[®], the Part III, Clinical Skills Exam was administered at several locations over the course of 3 weekends in April each year
- This process required 550 Examiners, 17 Site Coordinators, 400 standardized patients, and many other support staff to administer the exam

THE DECISION TO MOVE TO ONE TESTING SITE

- A variety of factors underwrote the NBEO Board of Directors' decision to open a national testing center.
- These factors included the following concerns, among others:
 - Examiner Fatigue / Burnout
 - Standardization of Patients
 - Incident Reports related to lack of standardization
 - The lack of flexibility for candidates in scheduling their exam
- The NBEO made the decision to create the NCCTO®
- The one-site testing center opened in 2011

CHOOSING CHARLOTTE, NC

- **The NBEO Board of Directors conducted a rigorous study to identify the best location for a testing center.**
 - The findings from this are available in the NBEO Report, “An Analysis of Best-Location Issues,” that can be found on our website at <https://www.optometry.org/articles.cfm>.
- **In 2018, NBEO re-evaluated testing site locations.**
 - The findings from the 2018 study were made available to you and we recommend you review the report closely.

PSYCHOMETRIC PERSPECTIVE ON MULTIPLE TEST SITES

- At the time of the development of the NCCTO[®], psychometric concerns centered around standardization and exam reliability.
 - The less standardized the exam experience is, the less reliable the results of the exam are.
 - When standardization increases, exam reliability increases.

PSYCHOMETRIC PERSPECTIVE ON MULTIPLE TEST SITES

- Since the opening of the NCCTO[®], issues related to standardization of dropped dramatically.
 - Incident reports have decreased substantially, and when an incident does occur, it is addressed systematically and in the same manner for every candidate.
 - All standardized patients throughout the exam go through the same training and receive feedback for continuous improvement.
 - Because the test is not administered in a narrow time frame, examiner fatigue and burnout is no longer an issue.