College of Osteopathic Medicine
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

COMPUTER-BASED ASSESSMENTS IN THE PRECLERKSHIP

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2024   **NEXT REVIEW:** November, 2025

APPROVED BY: College Curriculum Committee   **DATE**: November 15, 2023

CATEGORY: Academic

APPLIES TO: Students in the Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) Program

REFERENCES AND RELATED POLICIES:

- Standard 11 – Program and Student Assessments and Outcomes, COCA Standards for Continuing Accreditation (effective 2023)
- See also: MSUCOM Policy on Attendance and Excused Absences in the Preclerkship

PURPOSE

This policy will describe the policies and protocols for computer-based examinations used by the College of Osteopathic Medicine in the Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.) program. This policy specifically relates to computer-based exams administered by COM to osteopathic medical students in required coursework in the OMS-I and OMS-II program years.

Other protocols may be used for other assessments within COM courses, including clinical skills assessments, and in assessments offered through the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME), including COMAT and COMSAE examinations. Protocols for these examinations will be communicated to students in advance.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

1. **Examination platform and overview**

    a. MSUCOM uses the ExamSoft system for administration of major course examinations.

    b. Students will download Examplify, which is ExamSoft's test-taking application, to their own device (laptops only). Exams may not be taken on a tablet or smartphone.

    c. Examinations will be administered most typically on-campus in designated MSUCOM classrooms. On occasion, selected examinations may be administered off-campus/online. The format for the examination will be determined by the college.

- On-campus examinations will be monitored by MSUCOM personnel and/or proctors. If an exam is scheduled as an on-campus exam, a student may not request to take the exam remotely.

- Online exams may be monitored using technology, including video proctoring via the Examplify platform. See additional information below regarding online exam protocols.

d. Students will be responsible for updating the software as recommended by ExamSoft, and for ensuring that they have a device which is compatible with the technology.

2. **Students' responsibilities prior to exam day**

a. Students will receive an email notification when a scheduled examination is available for download. It is the responsibility of the student to download the exam to their device prior to arrival for on-campus exams, or prior to the published start time for remote exams.

b. Students are encouraged to complete the download by 1:00 pm Eastern time on the weekday prior to the exam, in case of technical issues. The exam cannot be opened until the start code is entered at the designated start time.

c. Students must verify their assigned exam room in advance. Students will be expected to take exams at their assigned site and location. Exceptions may be made with sufficient advance notice; students should contact a site administrator or curriculum assistant.

d. Devices should be fully charged prior to the exam. Power cords or chargers will be permitted in the exam room.

3. **Exam day procedures – on-campus exams**

a. Arrival and check-in: The exam classrooms will be open 30 minutes prior to the published exam start time. Students are expected to arrive prior to the exam start time for check-in procedures. The classroom doors will close 5 minutes prior to the start of the exam. Students who arrive late will not be admitted to the classroom (see section below on Late Arrivals and Absences).

b. Permitted items: Each student must have their charged laptop with the exam downloaded to be admitted to the classroom. The student may also bring the following items into the exam room:
   - Power cord or charging cable
   - Mouse
   - Pen or pencil
   - Soft foam earplugs

c. Prohibited items: The student may not bring any other items into the exam room. Students should leave sufficient time to store their personal belongings in their locker. The college will not be responsible for items left unsecured. The list below describes specific items that are prohibited.

   - Cell phones
   - Watches, FitBits, or similar devices
   - Headphones, earphones, earbuds

- Calculators
- Backpacks, bags, briefcases, purses
- Notes, notebooks, reference materials, books, scratch paper from home
- Food, drinks, water bottles (see section below on Accommodations)

d. Hats and clothing: Students cannot wear baseball caps, hoods, sunglasses, or any other item which would prevent proctors from observing their eyes. Students may wish to dress in layers due to temperature variations in the exam room. Coats, sweaters, etc. must be placed on the back of the student's chair.

e. Items provided by proctors or available in the exam room:

- One sheet of scratch paper - must be returned on exiting the exam room
- Tissues
- Soft foam earplugs

f. Prior to the start of the exam, proctors will make a final announcement for students to check for any prohibited items and turn them in to a proctor; there will be no penalty to the student. Electronic devices will be shut off when turned in to a proctor and may be retrieved when the student has completed the examination.

g. A student who is found to be in possession of any electronic devices other than their laptop, tablet, or iPad during an examination will be in violation of this policy and will forfeit all points associated with the examination and will be referred to the Committee on Student Evaluation (COSE) for professional misconduct/policy violation.

h. A student who is found to be in possession of notes pertaining to the exam will be referred for academic misconduct to the College Hearing Committee as defined in Article 5 of the MSRR.

i. Exam proctors have the right to examine and retain any prohibited items.

4. **Procedures in the examination room**

a. There will be no talking or communicating with other students while the exam is in progress. Students will be expected to keep their focus on their own device.

b. Technical issues: Proctors can assist with technical issues with the exam software but will not answer questions about the content of any exam items.

c. Comments on exam items: During some exams, the comment feature in Examplify may be activated. This allows the student to add a comment to an exam item. If this feature is not enabled, the student may submit a comment using the scratch paper provided by proctors and providing it to a proctor at the end of the exam. Faculty will review comments submitted through the system and on paper.

d. Exam room environment: Proctors will attempt to keep the testing environment as free from preventable distractions as possible. While it must be recognized that some distractions cannot be controlled (such as trains in East Lansing), administrators and/or proctors will address correctable distractions in an effort to keep the exam room as quiet as possible during the test. Proctors may address disruptive or distracting behavior by relocating students within the exam room or to a separate testing room.

e. Restroom breaks: The student may be excused by a proctor if a restroom break is needed. The exam time will continue to run during restroom breaks. Students must leave their device and scratch paper in the exam room. Students may not access notes, electronic devices, or personal items (e.g., from their locker) while outside the exam room. Proctors may limit the number of students who may leave the exam room at one time. Proctors will ask the student to show that their pockets are empty on leaving from and returning to the exam room.

f. COVID-19 and other precautions: Measures to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, including use of masks or distancing, may be added to this protocol based on current MSU and site policies. Additionally, to reduce noise or lessen the potential spread of illness, proctors may relocate individuals who are repeatedly coughing or sneezing to a separate proctored location prior to or during the exam. If a student is relocated during an exam, their device will be shut down to stop their exam timer until they are ready to resume in their new test location, at which time the resume code will be used to restart their exam.

g. Exam completion: On completion of the exam, or at the end of the allowed exam time, the student will submit their exam for upload. The Examplify system will show a green "congratulations" screen to indicate the exam has been closed and uploaded. Prior to exiting the exam room, the student will show the green screen to the proctor and return scratch paper.

5. **Absences and Late Arrivals:**

a. General: Students are expected to take exams as scheduled and to arrive on time. Arriving on time is defined as being seated in the exam room when the door is closed 5 minutes prior to the start of an exam.

b. Makeup exams: Availability of make-up exams is defined in the course syllabus. If an excused absence is granted, and make-up exams are available as defined in the course syllabus, arrangements will be made for a make-up examination at a date, time, and location and in a format determined by the course director.

c. Absences: A student who is ill or has a personal or family emergency may request an excused absence as defined by the Excused Absence Policy and related procedures.

   i) If an excused absence is granted, the student will be permitted to take a make-up exam for full credit, provided this is allowed in the course syllabus. Some courses do not offer make-up exams but instead allow a student to drop a low score.

   ii) If an excused absence is not granted, the student will be permitted to take a make-up examination with point deductions as defined below.

   iii) The number of excused absences will be tracked. Excessive numbers of excused absences will be addressed as defined in the Preclerkship Attendance and Excused Absence policy.

d. Late arrivals: A student who arrives after the exam room doors are closed will be considered a late arrival. Local staff may permit the student to complete the exam on site. The student may submit an excused absence request form after the exam to indicate the reason for their late arrival.

   i) If an excused late arrival is granted, the exam will be scored without penalty.

ii) If an excused late arrival is not granted, the exam will be scored with point deductions as defined below.

e. Point reductions for unexcused absence and unexcused late arrivals: If an absence or late arrival is not excused, the student will receive a point deduction on the exam or quiz as defined below.

    i) Unexcused absences and late arrivals will be tracked longitudinally[i] through semesters 1 through 6. Each unexcused absence or an unexcused late arrival will be counted as an "incident". [ii]

    ii) On the first incident, there will be a 10% deduction on the exam score earned.

    iii) On the second incident, there will be a 20% deduction on the exam score earned, and the student will be referred to meet with a college administrator at the student's site:

        • The Associate Dean at the Detroit Medical Center

        • The Associate Dean at the Macomb University Center

        • The Senior Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs or the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education at the East Lansing campus

    iv) On the third incident, the student will forfeit all points and will be referred to the COSE for review of professionalism.[iii]

6. **Unexpected Technology Issues:**

a. If a student experiences a technology failure with their personal device or the Examplify software, the examinee must inform a proctor.

b. If the issue occurs before the exam begins, the proctor will provide a substitute device or paper version.

c. If the issue occurs any time after the exam is started, the student will be provided with a substitute device and given the opportunity to restart the examination. If no substitute device is available, the student will complete the examination via paper.

d. Upon completion of the exam, the substitute device or paper examination must be returned to the exam administration staff.

7. **Academic Integrity:**

a. Each student must adhere to this policy and any additional instructions provided by the exam administration staff. A failure to do so may be considered a violation of MSU and MSUCOM policies on academic integrity, and may result in disciplinary actions that may include a loss of credit for the exam or other sanctions, up to and including dismissal, as defined in the course syllabus or the "Medical Student Rights and Responsibilities" document.

8. **Accommodations:**

a. MSUCOM curriculum assistants will work with a student who has an active Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) or Accommodations Letter (AL) document

through MSU's Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD) to arrange for accommodations as documented.

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[i] Academic Programs will be responsible for tracking absences and late arrivals.

[ii] With the implementation of this policy on January 1, 2024, the number of incidents (unexcused absences or late arrivals) for current students will be reset to zero and tracked cumulatively from that date forward.

[iii] A finding of professional misconduct by the COSE will be reported on the student's Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE).