American Osteopathic Board of Internal Medicine

Regulations, Requirements
and Procedures

October 2016

American Osteopathic Board of Internal Medicine
142 E. Ontario Street
Chicago, IL  60611
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I. OVERVIEW OF THE BOARD

A. Name and History of the Board

The name of this organization is the American Osteopathic Board of Internal Medicine (AOBIM), hereafter referred to as the Board. The Board was established in 1942, upon approval by the Board of Trustees of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA). All Regulations and Requirements within this document have been approved by the American Osteopathic Association. This Board is a non-profit affiliate of the American Osteopathic Association and reports to the AOA Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists. The members of the Board are appointed for three-year terms by the AOA Board of Trustees. The Board members are nominated by the AOBIM after approval by the Board of Directors of the American College of Osteopathic Internists to the AOA Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists.

B. General Policies and Procedures

This document supersedes all previous publications of the Board concerning Regulations, Requirements and Procedures. When an applicant applies to this Board for the first time for a particular examination they must meet the requirements that are in effect when application is made regardless of when training was undertaken.

All candidates are admitted to examinations at the discretion of the Board. The Board reserves the right to cancel and reschedule examinations under unusual circumstances. The Board reserves the right to delete questions or portions of the examination.

The Board does not offer or endorse any specific publications or courses to prepare for any of its examinations.

The Board reserves the right to make changes in its fees and procedures at any time. It cannot assume responsibility for giving advance notice thereof.

The provisions of this publication are not to be construed as a contract between any candidate and the American Osteopathic Board of Internal Medicine.

C. Purposes of the Board

The purposes of this Board are to define the qualifications to be required of osteopathic physicians for certification and Osteopathic Continuous Certification in the field of internal medicine and of any other subspecialty field that may be assigned to this Board; determine the qualifications of osteopathic physicians as specialists for certification in the field of internal medicine and of any other specialty field that may be assigned to it; conduct examinations in conformity with the Bylaws, Policies and Requirements of this Board; issue certificates, subject to the recommendations of the Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists and to the approval of the Board of Trustees of the AOA, to those physicians who are found qualified; recommend revocation of certificates for cause; and use every means possible to maintain a high standard of practice in this specialty within the osteopathic profession. The actions of the Board are subject to the recommendations of the Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists and to the approval of the AOA Board of Trustees.

D. Duties of the Board

The duties of the Board include but are not limited to the following: Serve as an advisory body to all applicants for certification and OCC in the specialty of internal medicine and any subspecialty which may be assigned to its jurisdiction; determine the appropriate standards of education and the training held necessary for certification in the specialty of internal medicine and of any other subspecialty which may be assigned to its jurisdiction, subject to the recommendation of the Bureau and to the approval of the AOA Board of Trustees; establish detailed rules for conducting all examinations; file with the Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists, recommendations concerning each applicant for certification and OCC; provide
and issue certificates in all fields assigned to this Board's jurisdiction; and levy and collect from applicants the funds necessary to finance the operation of this Board.

E. Meaning of Certification and OCC

The certification and OCC program in Internal Medicine and of any other subspecialty or specialty field that may be assigned to this Board is designed to recognize excellence among those individuals who provide care in the discipline of internal medicine. Certification by the Board is not a requirement to practice internal medicine or a subspecialty. The Board does not intend either to interfere with or restrict professional activities of a licensed physician because the physician is not certified or completed OCC in a particular specialty or subspecialty of internal medicine.

F. Areas of Certification and OCC Offered

1. Specialty of Internal Medicine

   The Board awards a Diplomate certificate in the specialty of internal medicine to physicians who have satisfactorily completed the requirements for certification and have passed the necessary certifying examinations administered by this Board.

2. Subspecialties of Internal Medicine

   Physicians who have been awarded a Diplomate certificate in internal medicine may seek certification in a subspecialty of internal medicine if they have completed the necessary requirements for a particular subspecialty area of internal medicine. In order to become certified in the subspecialty area, the Diplomate must pass the necessary examination administered by this Board. The Board offers examinations in the following subspecialties:

   Allergy/Immunology (Conjoint Adult/Pediatric examination with the AOB Pediatrics)
   Cardiology
   Endocrinology
   Gastroenterology
   Hematology
   Infectious Disease
   Nephrology
   Oncology
   Pulmonary Diseases
   Rheumatology

3. Subspecialties previously termed Certificates of Added Qualifications

   Diplomates in internal medicine and/or the subspecialties may seek subspecialty certification by meeting the requirements established by this Board and passing the necessary examination in the following subspecialties:

   Addiction Medicine (conjoint examination)
   Correctional Medicine (conjoint examination)
   Clinical Cardiac Electrophysiology
   Critical Care Medicine
   Geriatric Medicine
   Hospice and Palliative Medicine (conjoint examination)
   Interventional Cardiology
   Pain Medicine (conjoint examination)
   Sleep Medicine (conjoint examination)
   Sports Medicine (conjoint examination)
   Undersea and Hyperbaric Medicine (conjoint examination)
4. **Osteopathic Continuous Certification (OCC)**

The OCC Program in Internal Medicine was instituted January 1, 2013 and replaced recertification. OCC is voluntary for all Diplomates who hold a certification certificate dated prior to January 1, 1993. All certificates issued by this Board after December 31, 1992, are time-limited to ten (10) years and OCC will be required within the ten-year period in order to maintain a valid certificate. OCC in the subspecialties of internal medicine and added qualifications was initiated January 1, 2013. Beginning January 1, 2013 OCC in internal medicine, subspecialties and added qualifications will be a part of the Osteopathic Continuous Certification program which can be found at [www.osteopathic.org](http://www.osteopathic.org).

**G. Board Eligibility**

Board Eligibility status does not pertain to certified individuals. See policy H. below regarding certification that has expired.

**H. Reentry into the Recertification Process**

If a Diplomate allows their time-limited certificate to expire they may reenter the OCC process at any time thereafter. Once a certificate expires there is no time limit on reentering the OCC process. However during the period of time of the lapsed certification or recertification the Diplomate is listed as not certified until the OCC program is completed.

**VI. OSTEOPATHIC CONTINUOUS CERTIFICATION PROCESS (Replaces Recertification)**

The OCC program in internal medicine and its subspecialties is developed by the American Osteopathic Board of Internal Medicine for certified internists and subspecialists. The objectives of the program are to promote and verify academic and professional excellence over a Diplomate’s lifetime of practice, to set standards of clinical competence for the practice of osteopathic internal medicine, and to improve the quality of patient care. Since the pool of candidates entering the OCC process are a select group who have previously demonstrated their scholarly excellence, it is anticipated that the design of the OCC program will assure that almost all of the Diplomates will be able to successfully revalidate their certificates. Certificates in internal medicine or a subspecialty issued prior to 1993 are not time-limited and therefore are valid for life. OCC is voluntary for Diplomates with lifetime certificates. Failure to pass the OCC secure examination by Diplomates with lifetime certificates will have no effect on the Diplomate’s existing certificate. Diplomates may apply for entry into the process of OCC at any time after initial certification or previous recertification. The only prerequisite is that the Diplomate must have been previously certified by the AOBIM in the area(s) in which they seek OCC and complete the required components of OCC based upon when their current certificate expires. The OCC program will allow Diplomates to complete OCC in several disciplines simultaneously, i.e., internal medicine, and subspecialty. OCC in the subspecialties listed in I.F., 2. do not require OCC in internal medicine, but OCC in Addiction Medicine, Correctional Medicine, Geriatric Medicine and Sports Medicine requires the Diplomate to possess a valid certificate in Internal Medicine. OCC in Critical Care Medicine, Hospice and Palliative Medicine, Pain Medicine, Sleep Medicine and Undersea and Hyperbaric Medicine requires OCC in the underlying discipline which established their initial eligibility for subspecialty certification. Certificates become invalid when the requirements for OCC are not met.

**A. Requirements for OCC in Internal Medicine**

Diplomates will need to complete the following requirements:

The applicant must have a valid, unchallenged, unrestricted license to practice in the state or territory where his or her practice is conducted prior to and during the recertification process.

The applicant must be an active member in good standing of the AOA and maintain continuous membership in the AOA.
The applicant must be able to show evidence of conformity to the standards set in the Code of Ethics of the AOA if requested.

The applicant must complete 30 points of Internal Medicine Self-Assessment modules for certificates expiring prior to 2019, 60 points for certificates expiring 2019-2021 and 100 points for certificates expiring after 2021. Details are described on the link for OCC Program Description on the AOBIM website. Points will count toward review courses that include a post-test self-assessment.

The applicant must complete fifty (50) credit hours of internal medicine continuing medical education (CME) during the 36-month period prior to the OCC Secure (recertification) examination. CME credit will be granted for the points attained from self-assessment modules.

The applicant must show satisfactory competence in clinical practice in the field being examined. This process will be determined predominantly by verification provided by the applicant's local medical peers. This documentation will be provided by the Chief Medical Officer at the location of the applicant's principal clinical practice. A specific form to verify clinical competence will be supplied by the Board on the website and must be returned to the Board by the medical authority completing the form and not the applicant. Verification of clinical competence will include components common to all applicants and the type of clinical practice carried out by the applicant. The applicant will be responsible for including on the verification form the specific components of his or her clinical practice according to the directions included within the application packet.

Following satisfactory compliance with the above prescribed requirements the applicant is required to pass the secure cognitive examination.

B. OCC in a Subspecialty

Diplomates must satisfactorily complete the first four requirements (i.e., AOA membership, State license, AOA Code of Ethics, 50 hours Internal Medicine CME) listed for internal medicine above in addition to all of the following:

The applicant must complete 30 points of Internal Medicine Self-Assessment modules for certificates expiring prior to 2019, 60 points for certificates expiring 2019-2021 and 100 points for certificates expiring after 2021. For each of the required number of points, a minimum of 30% must be in the subspecialty. Details are described on the link for OCC Program Description on the AOBIM website.

The applicant must show satisfactory competence in clinical practice in the subspecialty being examined. This process will be determined predominantly by verification provided by the applicant's local medical peers. This documentation will be provided by the Chief Medical Officer at the location of the applicant's principal clinical practice. A specific form to verify clinical competence will be supplied by the Board in the application packet and must be returned to the Board by the medical authority completing the form and not the applicant. Verification of clinical competence will include components common to all applicants and the type of clinical practice carried out by the applicant. The applicant will be responsible for including on the verification form the specific components of his or her clinical practice according to the directions included within the application packet.

Following satisfactory compliance with the above prescribed requirements the applicant is required to pass the subspecialty or added qualifications OCC secure cognitive examination.

C. Secure OCC Cognitive Examination

The secure cognitive examination will be a computer-based one-day examination consisting of multiple-choice questions of the "one best answer" type. There will be a total of 150 items on the internal medicine computer-based examination and 100 or 150 items on the subspecialty examinations. The internal medicine examination will cover the broad aspects of internal medicine that practicing internists
are expected to know. Most items will be constructed to be clinically relevant and germane to the actual practice of most Diplomates. All areas of internal medicine will be covered as thoroughly as possible, i.e., allergic disorders, cardiovascular, endocrine disorders, electrolyte disorders, gastrointestinal, hematological, infectious diseases, neurological, oncological disorders, pulmonary diseases, renal diseases, dermatological manifestations of internal disease, clinical pharmacology, etc. Clinical situations involving diagnoses, cause, prognosis, and natural history of disease and treatment will be stressed in the above disorders. There will be clinically oriented questions with case history data included. In some of the clinical situations the candidate will be asked to interpret visual material such as physiological data, ECGs, urine sediments, peripheral smears, gastrointestinal imaging studies, chest radiographs, gram stains, dermatological lesions, and physical findings. The subtest distribution of items on the examinations will follow the blueprints published on the website for internal medicine and the subspecialties.

D. OCC in More Than One Area

For those individuals who are certified or previously recertified in a subspecialty and/or area of added qualifications, the opportunity will be given for simultaneous completion of OCC in multiple areas in which a Diplomate holds a certificate. The Diplomate who elects to complete more than one subspecialty concurrently will complete the examinations on the same day and must complete all of the requirements listed above for each of the examinations. If a candidate is sitting for both internal medicine and subspecialty secure examination, the internal medicine examination will be offered on a different date than the subspecialty examination. If the candidate fails one examination but passes the other(s), the candidate will be required to sit for the entire examination that was failed at the next annual examination date. For all examinations, the AOBIM uses an absolute standard (which permits everyone to pass) for passing, and candidates must exceed a specific level of performance to obtain a passing score.

E. Reentry into the OCC Process

If a Diplomate allows their time-limited certificate to expire they may reenter the OCC process at any time thereafter. Once a certificate expires there is no time limit on reentering the OCC process. However during the period of time of the lapsed certification the Diplomate is listed as not certified until the OCC components are completed.

VII. PROCEDURES FOR APPLICATION

A. Responsibility of the Candidate

Although the Board publishes all application deadlines and examination schedules in various publications, it is the candidate's responsibility to be aware of all deadlines.

Candidates must use an application form which may be obtained by registering at the website www.aobim.org during the scheduled periods of registration. Application deadlines and examination dates are published on www.aobim.org and on a regular basis in the American College of Osteopathic Internists newsletter, the ACOI website (www.acoi.org), and the AOA website (www.osteopathic.org).

B. Application Deadlines and Late Applications

1. OCC Secure Cognitive Examinations

All completed applications must be postmarked no later than April 1st of the year in which the applicant intends to appear for examination. There is no application fee; however, a one hundred dollar ($100) late fee is assessed to those applications received between April 2nd and May 1st. No applications are accepted after May 1st and will be considered for the examination given during the
C. Examination Fees

The Internal Medicine examination fee is $600 and the subspecialty examination fee is $450 dollars and is due by April 1st. A $100 late fee is assessed for all fees postmarked after April 1st. If taking more than one subspecialty examination on the same date the fee is $700. The fees for the conjoint examinations will vary. Please refer to the AOBIM website or the AOA website for specific information.

D. Examination Cancellations and Refunds

No fees are refunded unless the candidate withdraws from the examination process which will require repeating the application process. All fees due to the candidate are credited toward the next year’s examination.

Cancellations for the examinations must be submitted to the Board in writing.

E. Rescoring of Examinations

On written request and payment of a fee of $200 candidates may obtain manual review by the Board psychometrician of the computer scoring of the examination within one month of receiving the results. Candidates are not allowed to review specific items on the examination either before or after sitting for examination. The electronic scoring of the candidates results will be deleted 24 months after administration of the examination.

F. Reexamination

Candidates who do not pass any certifying examination may apply for reexamination. The reexamination fee is identical to the examination fee.

VIII. TIME-LIMITED CERTIFICATES

A. Issuance

OCC certificates after receiving the approval of the Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists shall be issued by this Board. Each certificate shall be mailed by first class mail and addressed to the most recent address provided by the applicant. Candidates will be responsible for the cost of payment of a duplicate certificate which has been lost and not returned to the Board, in which the mailing address was not the current updated address of the applicant. It is the responsibility of the candidate to notify the Board office in writing of any change in address.

B. Time-limited Certification

Each certificate shall be numbered in sequence and registered by the secretary-treasurer of the Board. All certification certificates issued after 1992 will be valid for a period of ten (10) years from the date of issuance. The certificate will contain the year of issuance and the year of expiration. Certificates issued before 1993, with the exception of recertification certificates, will continue to be valid indefinitely. All previous recertification certificates and OCC certificates are time-limited for a period of ten (10) years from the date of issuance. In order for all time-limited certificates to remain valid the Diplomate must be registered for OCC and meet the requirements for OCC. If the OCC components are not maintained during the 10-year period certification becomes invalid but will be reinstated when the component requirements are met.
IX. MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES

A. Disclosure of Examination Results

Examination results are transmitted by mail to each applicant. Under no circumstance will results be released by telephone or FAX. Release of individual examination results will be provided to the candidate’s Program Director. The Board will release group pass/fail results and group examination results to the Program Director of each training program and to the Council on Education and Evaluation of the American College of Osteopathic Internists. This information is provided in order to assist in the evaluation of the program's educational effectiveness. Individual results will not be released to the Council on Education and Evaluation.

B. Irregular or Improper Behavior

All Board examination results are reviewed by Board members. Improper behavior, including but not limited to, giving or obtaining unauthorized information or aid, looking at the test material of others, taking notes, failing to comply with computer site staff instructions, talking or other disruptive behavior will be considered a possible subversion of the certification process. Candidates must not discuss the examination while the session is in progress. Candidates must not disclose the content of the examination to others or reproduce any portion of the examination in any manner including reconstruction through memorization, electronic means or dictation. Candidates will be asked to sign a statement of adherence to this policy on the application form and at the time of examination. All examinations of this Board are copyrighted and protected by Federal law. The above policies apply to all examination given by the AOBIM.

It is a Federal offense to copy or reproduce any portion of the certifying examinations. Irregular or improper behavior that is observed, that is made apparent by statistical analysis, or that is shown by other means, will constitute grounds for invalidation of the candidate's examination. Other sanctions, such as exclusion from future examinations for an indefinite period of time and informing licensing bodies or law enforcement agencies may be invoked at the Board's discretion.

C. Appeals

If a candidate feels that the actions of the Board with regard to any part of the examination constitute unequal application of the regulations and requirements or standards, unwarranted discrimination, prejudice, unfairness, or improper conduct of the examination, the applicant has the right to appeal to this Board. No appeals may be made based on content of the examination.

An appeal to the Board must be in writing by the applicant stating the reasons for requesting an appeal. If the candidate is not satisfied with the results of an appeal before this Board, the candidate has the right to further appeal to the Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists. If the candidate is not satisfied with the results of the appeal before the Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists, the candidate has the right to further appeal to the AOA Board of Trustees. During any level of appeal the candidate or anyone representing the candidate will not be allowed to review any items on the examination.

D. Revocation of Certificates

If a Diplomat with a non-time limited certificate no longer meets any one of the following requirements for maintaining certification status with the AOA, his/her certificate shall become inactive and removed from the certification register of the AOA:

Maintain membership in the AOA;

Pay the annual certification registration fee assessed by the AOA.
Maintain a minimum of 120 hours of approved and documented AOA CME credits within a three (3) year period of which at least 50 hours shall be in the primary specialty.

If a Diplomate with a time-limited certificate no longer meets the requirements for OCC their certificate becomes inactive until the requirements are subsequently met.

The Board may at its discretion revoke any certificate under the following circumstances:

The Diplomate was not in fact qualified to receive the certificate at the time it was issued, even if the certificate was issued as a result of a mistake on the part of the Board;

The Diplomate made any material misstatement of fact or admission of fact to the Board in connection with the Diplomate’s application or otherwise; or the Diplomate's license to practice medicine has been revoked in any jurisdiction.

E. Disabled Candidates

The Board will, when possible, offer the certifying examination in a place and manner that is accessible to individuals with disabilities and, when necessary, alternative accessible arrangements under comparable conditions to those provided for nondisabled individuals are offered to disabled individuals. Candidates who may need accommodation during the examination for a disability must provide a written request to the Board at the time of application for examination or prior to May 1st of the examination year. The candidate must provide details of accommodations previously provided by the NBOME or equivalent testing organization and related documentation in writing no later than five months prior to the date of the examination. An evaluation and assessment of the disability with a written report supplied to the Board by a credible body must have been completed within three years of the date of examination. For those requiring additional testing time, in no instance will more than double time be granted.

F. Policy Regarding Adverse Testing Conditions for Computer-Based Examinations

The following policies apply in the event any adverse condition (e.g., unreasonable and substantially distracting noise or other activity) occurs or is alleged to occur during the administration of any computer-based AOBIM examination.

If a candidate believes that the testing conditions have or will substantially and adversely affect their performance on the examination, the candidate must immediately bring that circumstance to the attention of the test center staff. If the condition is not resolved to the satisfaction of the candidate at the test site, then the candidate may choose one of the two following options:

1. Continue examination. If the candidate elects to continue with the examination, the candidate will have been deemed to have accepted the conditions of the testing environment, and his or her examination will be scored and reported in the normal course and the candidate shall have no recourse against the AOBIM, its testing vendor or their employees, agents or representatives; or

2. Withdraw from examination. If the candidate chooses to withdraw from the examination prior to its completion then the examination shall be voided and not scored, and the following shall apply:

   A. If the test center staff verifies to the AOBIM that the condition complained of did not exist or that it existed but did not or would not have substantially and adversely affected the candidate’s performance on the examination, the candidate may not reschedule to take the examination until the next regularly scheduled examination, must pay a full examination fee, and may not elect to withdraw from any future AOBIM examination.

   B. If the test center staff verifies to the AOBIM that the condition complained of did exist and that it did or would have substantially and adversely affected the candidate’s performance of the examination, the candidate may reschedule the examination at the next regularly
scheduled examination date and will not be assessed any additional fee. The examination to
the extent completed will be voided and not reported.

If a candidate withdraws from the examination prior to completion of the examination because of any adverse
testing condition, the candidate must provide to the AOBIM within ten days following the date of their withdrawal
credible and verifiable written evidence of the adverse testing condition, in addition to immediately reporting such
circumstance to the test center staff at the time of the examination. Failure to comply with this requirement, will
result in the candidate waiving any objection to the testing conditions of the examination, and shall have no recourse
against the AOBIM, its testing vendor or their employees, agents or representatives. Any and all findings and
determinations of the AOBIM shall be final and conclusive.

X. INFORMATION AND INQUIRIES

All inquiries, requests for information, and correspondence of any manner that is directed to this Board must be
addressed to:

American Osteopathic Board of Internal Medicine
142 E. Ontario Street
Chicago, IL  60611
or by e-mail to: admin@aobim.org

American Osteopathic Board
of Internal Medicine

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