

Preparing for the ABOS Combined Hand-Orthopaedic Written MOC Examination

The Subspecialty Certificate in Surgery of the Hand (formerly the CAQ)

This tip sheet is intended to help you prepare for the written exam as part of the ongoing Maintenance of Certification (MOC) through Hand and Orthopaedic surgery.

Our first tip: become very familiar with the **American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery (ABOS)** website at www.abos.org. Bookmark it and use a simple password; you will visit this website often.

Deciding When to Take the Exam

On the [ABOS website](http://www.abos.org) under the *Diplomates* tab, you will find a pull-down menu for MOC Timeline. If your ABOS certification expires in 2014, for example, the tab will link you to a pdf for your timeline, giving you options to take the exam in 2012, 2013, or 2014. A one-year buffer is preferred, so if for some reason you can't take the exam last minute (family emergency, health issues, etc.) or have fear of failure, you have a buffer year. If you were to take the written exam in 2014, then all documentation needs to be submitted by 15 December 2012.

Documentation

The MOC requires:

- 100 CME and 20 scored and recorded self-assessment examination (SAE) credits in **two 3-year cycles**, resulting in 240 Orthopaedic-related *AMA PRA Category 1 Continuing Medical Education (CME) Credits* over 6 years
- A notarized 3-month case list of consecutive surgical cases
- Verification of privileges and licensure
- A completed application

Documentation must begin 6+ years before taking the exam. For example, the 2017 recertifying class has the following deadlines:

- First round of 120 CME and self-assessment credits granted from 2008-2010 are due December 15, 2010 (just over 6 years before the exam).
- Second round of 120 CME and self-assessment credits granted from 2011-2013 are due December 15, 2013 (just over 3 years before the exam).
- 3-month case list due December 15, 2013 (just over 3 years before the exam).
- Application and verification of privileges and licensure due May 1, 2016 (just over 1.5 years before the exam).

CME and Self-Assessment Exams

If you routinely attend ASSH and AAOS annual meetings, then you will have no trouble satisfying the 100-hour minimum of orthopaedic-related *AMA PRA Category 1 Continuing Medical Education (CME) Credits*.

For the 20 hour minimum of these 120 hours as Scored and Recorded SAEs, the AAOS and ASSH self-assessment exams are accepted for MOC by ABOS:

- a) [AAOS SAE exams](#) provide online and bundled options, which allow you to purchase, take the exam, score, and receive the 20-35 credits immediately. Examples are the [AAOS upper extremity package](#) (Pass rate to score: 51%)

Suggestion: Consider purchasing and taking general ortho, pediatric, trauma, and OITE exams, useful for preparing for the general ortho portion of the written exam

- b) [ASSH SAE exams](#) are published yearly, granting 20 CME credits if the answer sheet is submitted by the deadline and scored. The caveat is that the scoring takes place weeks to months later rather than on demand, which is a factor if you are pressed for time. (Pass rate to score: 50%)

Suggestion: Consider purchasing the [SAE 10-year bundle](#) as a study guide

- c) [AAOS OITE](#) is similar to the ASSH SAE exams: you must submit your answers by mail, with a scoring delay of weeks to months (Pass rate to score: 51%).

The eligible SAEs vary in length: ASSH and OITE are 20 credits each, and the AAOS bundled [anatomy, tumors, and upper extremity package](#) is a combined 35 units.

Application & Fees

In order to take the written exam, several steps occur in the 2.5 years preceding the exam:

- Submit a 3-month notarized case list
- Submit verification of privileges and licensure
- Submit the 2nd cycle of CME verification, including the Scored and Recorded SAEs
- Apply to take the exam

Once candidates receive their acceptance-to-sit letters, fees are due the December 15th of the year before the exam. Therefore, the 2017 recertifying class would need to pay their fees by December 15, 2016.

The Written Exam (“Evidence of Cognitive Expertise”)

If all requirements are met and fees are paid, then you will be given a permit and instructions on scheduling the computer-based exam at a nearby Prometric Technology Center.

Several components to MOC exist, which cover the same 6 core competencies (patient care, medical knowledge, interpersonal and communication skills, practice-based learning and improvement, professionalism, and systems-based practice) currently measured in residency training.

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Details of the exam follow:

- 255 questions given over 5 hours, in 1 hour blocks (51 questions/block)
- General ortho questions: approximately 80 of the 255 questions

Tip: The 2011 general ortho exam questions included a range of pediatric fracture, pediatric hip, multi-trauma, general systemic and inflammatory disorders, arthroplasty, and tumor. The questions were very similar to OITE questions.

Tutorials are provided on the ABOS website. The pass rate is high, but preparation is essential.

Preparation for the Written Exam

You have done this sort of written exam enough to know what preparation works for you. Many find attending the combined [AAOS/ASSH Comprehensive Review Course](#) held in July helpful by virtue that you are removed from your practice and other distractions for a few days. The sample questions provided also engage your mind to the process a few months before the exam. General orthopaedic self-assessment study guides are more suitable than the detailed OKU9 or OKU10.

Future MOC Changes

The new Fourth Component of MOC, Evidence of Performance in Practice, includes peer review assessment, sign your site, and other aspects of patient-doctor evaluation deemed important in promoting quality improvement. Further details of this component and how it will be instituted will be available on the [ABOS website](#) sometime in 2012.

Resources

MOC overviews:

ABOS: <https://www.abos.org/ModDefault.aspx?module=Diplomates§ion=MOCAbout#11>

ASSH: <http://www.assh.org/Members/Maintenance/Pages/default.aspx>

AAOS: http://www3.aaos.org/education/moc/moc_info.cfm

ASSH product resources: <http://admin.assh.org/Professionals/ProdsSvcs/Store/Pages/SelfAssessmentExam.aspx>

AAOS product resources: http://www3.aaos.org/product/CME_types.cfm?choice=sar

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Amy L. Ladd, MD

Peer reviewers:

Jeanne DeSignore, MD, David Slutsky, MD, Cary Tanner, MD, Arnold-Peter Weiss, MD