

2020 Qualifying Exam Q&A for Fellowship Program Directors and Managers

Webinar held on May 11, 2020

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GW – Dr. George Wendel

WL – Dr. Wilma Larsen

GW: Good afternoon. My name is Dr. George Wendel. I'm the Executive Director of ABOG, and I appreciate you taking the time away from your busy schedules of administration, patient care, and teaching to join us on the call today.

We'd like to follow up from our conversations a few weeks ago about the spring Qualifying Exam to give you an update of where we are. We continue to receive information from our exam delivery partner, Pearson VUE, about the reopening of their centers, what the standards will be at those centers, and what the opportunities will be to deliver exams to candidates.

I'm going to ask Dr. Larsen who joins me, our Associate Executive Director for Exams, and Cariel Apodaca, our Subspecialty Manager, to join me on the exam, and I'll let Wilma give you a brief update on where we are with the latest from Pearson VUE.

WL: Thank you, George. Hopefully everybody can hear me. Thank you all for joining us today.

We received a message from Pearson VUE this morning letting us know that they will be contacting all candidates who are going to lose their seats for the Qualifying Exam in June next Monday and Tuesday. If you were on our prior webinar, we explained that unfortunately, we don't have anything to do with the fact that Pearson VUE is decreasing 50% of their seats due to social distancing.

They have come up with an algorithm to make that reduction that is as fair as possible to every candidate so that no candidate is getting any kind of preferential treatment other than medical

exams are considered higher priority, but they still will be losing 50% of the seats. Approximately 770 of our candidates altogether out of the 2,000 for both Specialty Qualifying Exam and Subspecialty Qualifying Exam will lose their seats at the end of June.

They will be notified about that from Pearson VUE next Monday and Tuesday. Again, we will not know who those candidates are prior to that notification. However, we will be communicating with the candidates to let them know that's coming. Once we have the list of candidates that have been notified that they've lost their seats, we'll be reaching out to those candidates to make sure that they understand the options for rebooking or rescheduling their examinations.

What we're doing right now is trying to come up with as many options as feasible to allow candidates that want to take the Qualifying Exam in 2020 to do so. Things that we're looking at are, first of all, we have removed any time restriction for the exams for the dates that they're scheduled. When candidates take the Subspecialty Qualifying Exam, normally those are only scheduled for 8 a.m. local time. At this point, they could be scheduled for any time during the day. If a candidate was to lose their seat and a seat was available later in the day, they would be allowed to book the exam at a later time.

The next thing that we're looking at, and we don't have the date yet but we're definitely planning this is, to have second date later in the year to allow candidates to take the Qualifying Exam later in the year. Unfortunately, Pearson VUE has not been able to give us that date yet. They're working with all of the different exam delivery people. They have obviously a lot of different clients, and they have not been able to give us a secondary date. We're hoping for late summer or early fall, but once we have that, we'll certainly share that with the candidates and with you all right away.

Just like the June date, that date later in the year, they'll be allowed to schedule their exam for any time during the day. It doesn't have to be an 8 a.m. start time.

We're also looking into what are called authorized Pearson VUE testing centers. Normally, when we give our examinations, we only give them at owned and operated Pearson VUE testing centers, meaning that Pearson VUE actually owns all the centers where we administer our exams.

There are other centers. They are centers all across the country. There's about 2,400 of them that also can give Pearson VUE exams, and we're looking into allowing our exam to be given at those centers so that we have more options for the candidates, places that they could take the examination.

Finally, you all should have received a survey asking you to talk about or give us information about whether or not you would be able to act as a client proctoring center to allow the subspecialty exam to be administered at your institution. Some of you have responded with

that information, and thank you very much for doing so. I look forward to getting the responses from more of you, hopefully.

What we're doing is we're looking into the feasibility of allowing residencies and fellowships to administer the Qualifying Exam locally to their residents and fellows, and only potentially, allowing other candidates to come in, if that's something that they can comfortably do. Primarily, we're looking at this for your residents and fellows at your institution.

One thing that we didn't have in the survey is that we are planning to compensate the proctors. We'll be compensating them \$500 each of the two exams, so \$500 for the specialty and \$500 for the subspecialty to proctors that are administering that.

However, we have not completely determined the feasibility of this as an option. Those are the things that we're looking at to try to allow as many candidates possible to take the Qualifying Examination.

GW: As we said in the prior virtual meeting, we're really in uncharted areas here with changing information on almost a daily and weekly basis. I hope you appreciate our attempts to try to be as candid and as transparent as we can as we try to work through these options.

Our goal is to be able to offer the certification exam at more than one time this year for people and in a manner that meets our standards as a certification organization and their needs based on their personal situation and work situation. We hope that by being able to offer the exam in Pearson VUE centers at the end of June who are still scheduled, that will be one option.

We'll also have an option to potentially have you help proctor their exams and offer them in your centers on the same days. The next option is to take the exam in the fall. The final option would be to take the exam at a different time and schedule it next year. We hope to be able to offer all of those options to anybody in any circumstance, not knowing what it's going to be like in June.

We really appreciate all of your help in trying to figure out if it's a viable option to offer what they call client proctored exams.

I would just like to start by urging you to let your fellows know that they may be receiving a communication from Pearson VUE early next week. As Wilma said, as many as half of our candidates for the general exam as well as the subspecialty exams, may be receiving an email that their scheduled time to take the exam in June is cancelled and that they'll need to reschedule.

It's important that they pay attention to their email and try not to miss this communication. We will do everything we can to make sure we get a list of who is contacted and reach out to them

and have a broader discussion about options for taking the exam so that they can reschedule at what might be best for them, given the limitations of what can be offered.

It's also important to know that the people who are scheduled for the exam already have the option to take it in June at Pearson or to take one of the other options too, that's completely up to them and what options might be available to them for the examination. We will do everything we can to help meet those needs for individuals without incurring any increased fees from our perspective.

This is not how we usually do business. We're very embarrassed that we don't have more information for you, but this is an evolving situation really as we're speaking and getting emails on a daily basis.

The one thing that I would urge you to do as fellowship directors is try to coordinate your efforts and Program Managers also, coordinate your efforts with the residency directors so that if your institution or your department wants to be a remote proctor for this and proctor for all the fellows on one day and the residents on the other day, that you work together so that you can get the IT technical specifications examined and approved by your IT department. You can see what your limitations and opportunities are with your internal firewall and institution requirements and what the bandwidth is of your system to be able to take on a small number of candidates.

Clearly, the number of candidates on the subspecialty day will not be great. It may be an easier issue to have candidates on the subspecialty day. I would urge you to save some time and make things efficient and get in together when you're deciding to do this. It's not required that you do both the OB GYN exam and the subspecialty exams. You can do neither. You can do both. You can do one. It's entirely up to you all if you want to do it.

If you'd like to learn more about how much of a workload this will be, I would also talk to the residency Program Manager and Program Director. This is analogous to proctoring the CREOG in-training exam every year that's done in January. Your Program Director of the residency will have some experience with this and the Program Manager will also be familiar with the amount of work to get registered and a small amount of training.

Why is there little or no mention of the combination of residents in fellowship testing within the same OB GYN program?

WL: That question is why are we not mentioning giving the test on the same day? Because we can't do that. Our tests are test events that are given through Pearson VUE, so the subspecialty exam is given this year on the 26th of June, the specialty is given on the 29th. We don't have the ability to change that at this point to allow us to combine giving residents and fellowship

exams at the same date, same time. We have to give it on the date that it's been scheduled. There's really no option to do that by our contracts unfortunately.

GW: These contracts, these exams are offered by the other companies by contract that are negotiated years in advance. As you can imagine, June and May are the most busy months of the year for these testing companies and their clients. You have to reserve those spaces or they'll be taken up by other clients.

As much as we think that our test and 2,000 exams given on two days total is a lot, in the world of assessment, we're a small company, and there are other partners that their companies have that take up a lot more seats. Some are professions, some are GRE exams, some are GED exams. There's all kinds of other certification exams that they administer at these testing sites and those seats are all books throughout May and June years in advance. I wish we could put those together.

Please address the firewall issue mentioned in the Pearson VUE testing requirements since all institutions have firewalls of some kind.

WL: All institutions do have firewalls and issues with that. Fortunately, as Dr. Wendel mentioned, the CREOG exam is given every January at all the residency institutions, despite the fact that those institutions have firewalls, by coordinating in the test delivery company and the local IT. If we are able go with the client proctored process and we select your institution to be a place that can deliver it, it will be because you'll be able to meet all the requirements, and one would be that your IT would work with Pearson VUE to make sure that you could deliver the exam, despite whatever firewall you have at your organization.

That is something that is going to be coordinated ahead of time. It would not be something that we would wait until the last minute to determine. There is some prework that has to be done if we make the decision that we can go forward with the client proctor. There will be probably some organizations that would like to offer the exam at their institution and simply won't be able to because of the IT requirements.

In the email that you received about this webinar last Friday, there's a link to go to the Pearson VUE site and you can actually go in and test your internet and your equipment right there on the Pearson VUE site to make sure that it meets the requirements that would be needed to be a client proctored site.

If you follow the link that's in there and down at the bottom, it says Advanced, click on that and it lets you test your equipment to make sure that you would be able to give the exam at your site.

There will be some need for your IT people potentially to coordinate with the Pearson VUE IT.

Our IT can likely accommodate our residents taking the exam at our institution. However, there will be a significant charge for downloading a software and using the computer lab. Who is responsible for these costs, given the fees the candidates have already paid to ABOG for the exams?

GW: Our goal is not to have anybody incur any extra costs because of the COVID-19 adjustments that we're having to make. On an individual basis, we can determine what kind of IT costs we could reimburse to an institution to help administer the examination. Each institution may have requirements.

In some places, this can be done as easily as having a conference room, social distancing, whatever kind of personal protection you think is appropriate, and access to your institutions Wi-Fi for residents to log in, download the proprietary browser for the exam, lockdown their computer, take the exam, finish the exam, and then unlock their browser and computer and sign off.

However, there may be institutional requirements that do preclude that. There may be firewalls. It may be that you are required to use your testing center. We have set aside extra funds to help handle this, and we would urge you to work with your Program Director in the residency to see what the fees would be for these two days of testing, and we'll have to decide if it's reasonable and if we can afford to do that given the number of people that may be taking the test.

Our goal is that nobody pays extra because of the COVID pandemic and any accommodation that we're trying to make.

How will exam security be maintained if the applicant can take the exam at any time during the day?

GW: I'm not sure if that question is in regards to taking the exam at Pearson VUE, but hypothesize that that's the question. We'll rely upon professionalism and professional integrity. There is an agreement that every candidate has to take that they won't share the information, and we will for this year only, presume that that level of security and professionalism will be sufficient.

Having said that, that's all we can do is rely on that, and that is a potential compromise. In our strategic communication to the fellows in this case, we will advise them not to pass on information if they're overlapping times.

Importantly, the other thing about exam security is there are more than one exam forms, so it's really not really useful to tell someone what was on your examination because it's not going to be necessarily on their examination. That's the nature of assessment industry companies and

organizations like ours. That's everyday test security. We have more than one form for every exam. In some cases, we have multiple forms.

Will the authorized centers be used for the original date or the makeup date?

WL: If we make the decision to go ahead and go with authorized centers rather than just the Pearson VUE testing centers, our plan would be to allow that both of the dates, both the June date and the secondary date, if we're able to do that. These centers don't, although there's many of them, there's over 2,400 in the United States, they aren't required to administer a particular exam. They're contracted through Pearson VUE, but they can decide which exams they want to administer. There may be centers that although potentially administer our exam, they choose not to.

Our goal is to allow as many candidates as possible to take the exam. If we go forward with that plan, then we would plan to do that for both June and for the fall/summer exam.

GW: We're trying to increase the capacity so that there would be availability in more centers in more areas. Unfortunately, the caliber if you will of the owned centers is very different than those of the contracted or franchised centers. IT-wise and following Pearson VUE protocols should be handled equally in both areas.

I would caution that we're still working with Pearson VUE about the requirements to be allowed to schedule an exam and take an exam. One of the ones we've talked about in the email was that you can't have had any personal contact with anybody with COVID-19 in the two weeks prior to the examination.

This is simply to prevent their staff from inadvertently being exposed to someone who may be infected or about to become symptomatic. We are in negotiations with them to try and explain what that means and what are the implications of a healthcare worker working in a protected environment, using appropriate PPE, and following all the CDC and institutional infection control guidelines.

We're not sure what the final decision will be on that. That will come from Pearson VUE.

Who qualifies to be a proctor?

GW: Ideally, it would be the Program Director, one of the fellowship Program Directors, or one of the fellowship Program Managers. Or it could be the same proctor who proctored the OB GYN examination or is planning to. That's entirely up to you all. Program Directors, Program Managers are ideal. If that's not possible, another faculty member would be acceptable.

Have you considered asking candidates to volunteer to be rescheduled? Some may want to.

GW: Again, in the area of certification examinations, we make up the exams and set the standards for them, but the delivery is up to the partner who delivers your exams. In our case, that's Pearson VUE. The scheduling of exams is very complicated and it's not clear that you could volunteer to be rescheduled and somebody else could take your place.

We may have not been clear about it when we started, but anybody can reschedule their exam at any time, even if they have an appointment already scheduled for late June. Even if I don't get my exam cancelled next week, I can cancel the exam and take the alternate in the fall. I can cancel the exam at Pearson VUE and take it if there's a proctored exam in my department, or I can cancel my exam and take it next year if I want to.

All of those are available to every candidate right now.

We may have been unclear about that and I apologize. We want to make sure that the candidates know that they have every authority to take the exam when it's best for them and choose to take it whenever they want.

WL: And just to reiterate what Dr. Wendel said, we don't believe the situation is such. In fact, we've been told by Pearson VUE that if Dr. Larsen calls in to cancel her seat because she wants to give it to Dr. Wendel, it doesn't work that way. If I cancel my seat, that seat is available for any test candidate, not just ABOG test candidates, and so there's no benefit to cancelling a seat in the hopes that your fellow fellow would be able to take the test in the Pearson VUE center.

Can a fellow go to another institution that agrees to client proctor?

GW: That's entirely up to the proctor site that is putting on the exam. There are sites that do not want to allow candidates they don't know. There are other sites that don't want to allow people from other institutions. That's entirely up to the site proctoring. I believe that will be one of the things that they're allowed to do, to set their own capacity and set their own rules.

It's a security issue to some extent. It's also a comfort issue about being able to verify identities and that the users are who they say they are when they come in to take the exam. But in a city, if one institution wanted to be the site, that would be up to them. It adds a level of complexity that will be out of our control to facilitate, I would just say that.

Will incoming fellows who had planned to move to the area prior the exam be able to take the exam at our institution if the institutional testing is a feasible option?

WL: It really would depend on your institution. If your institution was going to give the exam and if we were doing the client proctored optioned and we cleared your institution to give it and your institution felt comfortable allowing people to take it that weren't current fellows or current residents, then yes, that would be allowable. It would just have to be registered to take it there, which we would facilitate that process, as well as be identified by whoever the proctor was at the time of the examination.

One of the things that we haven't mentioned, but is something that we do want to mention is, our expectation that there would only be one proctor for all the fellows that take the exam on that Friday. We would ask if you had four fellowships that were all going to take the exam, that you either as Program Directors or Program Managers, determine who that one proctor would be and they would proctor all of the fellows, not just the fellow for your particular program so that we can use economies of scale to make this as feasible as possible.

Can ABOG also reach out to the Program Directors of those fellows that are contacted with a change or cancellation notice?

GW: Yes. We're going to have a broader communication strategy about this that will involve as many people as we can to help make sure no one falls through the cracks and either misses an email notification or some sort of ability to feel confident that they know when their exam is. What that will include, notification of the program as best we can about the dates. One of the challenges is we also learned today that you can change your scheduling up into the very end in some cases, and so it's going to be hard to keep up with what are the changes that the candidates may be making themselves.

It's important also to know that they can always log in to the Pearson site, I believe, and confirm their scheduling date and time. Even if they don't get an email from Pearson, it's probably not a bad idea to go in and check their schedule to make sure it's still what they think it is.

Again, it's important, Pearson is not going to reach out to Jane Smith if her exam is not cancelled. They're just going to reach out and communicate with those whose exams are being cancelled and letting them know about what options are at that time for them for rescheduling.

What information is needed to determine if our institution can assist in the client proctoring option?

GW: We're still working on that. A general rough guide to that is in that communication that came with the invitation. There's a link to the Pearson VUE client proctoring option in there, and within that document, you'll also find a link that also will take you to the Advanced Technical Requirements so that you can begin to see what those requirements are.

It's important that it's not absolutely necessary to use a testing center or computer center to offer these exams unless your institution requires them. It is possible to take this exam with individual PCs that would be brought into a conference room that then would access the local network and then be able to take the examination.

That actually may be the ideal setting in some cases. Again, this is all going to be dependent on your local institutional requirements and firewalls. As with everything, when you use Wi-Fi, there's always the possibility of a weak signal, an unstable signal, or some sort of interruption in your examination that would require re-contacting the testing platform. In many cases in the technical information, you'll see that it's recommended that you use direct internet connections and not Wi-Fi, however it is possible to do so.

WL: The thing I'd like to add is just that for those of you who have not answered our survey regarding the client proctoring, I would ask that you please do so. Everyone should have received that survey link to the Survey Monkey survey last week. We ask that only the Program Director or the Program Manager fill it out, not both. It gives us some information so that we can collate all that and try to decide whether or not that's a feasible option.

I would ask that if you don't know your program number when you fill out the survey, please make sure you put enough identifying information so that I can figure out who the survey came from. We've got about half a dozen that I can't identify, which makes it hard because I want to make sure that everybody who wants to participate in this if we go that route is able to.

I would ask that any of you that haven't filled out the survey, please do so.

Do you know if Pearson took into consideration fellows in the same program or area? Is it possible that some graduating fellows from the same program will be able to take it and others will not be?

GW: I doubt they took any of that into account. They're using a very egalitarian approach to this, and they have hundreds of people taking a multitude of exams at a given testing center in a day, from a multitude of different sponsors. They're unable to meet contractual obligations to every single partner they have. They can't take into account things like that.

We're a very small customer in the assessment world, and they're taking care of their big customers and their small customers, and they're doing the best job they can. I don't know how they would be able to accommodate an issue like that.

Is the client proctored exam going to be available, or is this a hypothetical discussion?

GW: It will be available as an option, and it will, I think given our phone call with the Program Directors of the residencies before, it seems like a viable option for that group. We still are trying to figure out if this is going to be a viable option for the fellowships. That's why we're continuing gathering information and make sure we have proctors that could be available, have capability within the institution, and then capacity to handle who might want to take their exams with that option.

Again, this is a little less complicated than the residencies just due to numbers.

We hope to have a final decision in the very near future. If it's an option, we're going to try to time this as much as we can with the Pearson VUE cancellations, but we still are having to negotiate with Pearson VUE to be able to have the capability of delivering this test and having a contract with them that they'll promise to have our capability available for that test.

In a sense, it seems like this test is seven to eight weeks away, and that's a long time in the assessment world and in programming and all of that. There's usually a 60-day period beyond which they can deliver things, but under that threshold, they can't deliver on changes like this, so we're really feverishly trying to get information quickly and make decisions and move forward in the best fashion we can.

Do we need to go through a certification process to give the exam? And if yes, where do we find that information?

GW: Again, I'm not sure if it's a certification process, but there are technical requirements and specifications that an institution would have to meet to be able to deliver the exam through the web-based browser. Basically, everybody's going to log in to either a PC or a computer at an institution, download software. The software will allow the exam to be taken. The exam will be completed. The software will then uninstall, and during this time, the computer has to be locked down for all other purposes.

Those kind of technical requirements would have to be met, and that would be part of the agreement if you do request to have proctoring and then want to do it. We would be working with you over the next seven to eight weeks to make sure that's doable. We haven't gotten the details of all that yet.

If a candidate does not lose their seat for the exam that is currently scheduled, did I correctly understand that they can still opt to utilize the different testing options instead. I'm specifically thinking about a fellow who may not lose their seat but who has a partner in another fellowship who does lose their seat, and because of post-training plans, need to get tests together, for example, say day, same place.

GW: I don't see how that's possible. Again, this is out of our control. That's why there's lots of different options available. In some cases, the best thing to do is take the alternate date in the fall or postpone it to the next year. I'm not sure you're going to be able to do all the kinds of things planning-wise one might think. We received an email today about the "please be understanding of Pearson VUE" that they are only going to be running their centers at 50% capacity for the rest of this year to be able to do infection control guidelines, social distancing, wearing masks, and wearing gloves for the exam.

If our medical school's lab center has already been used for CREOG's exams, should we assume that this will be good to go for the fellowship exam?

WL: You can't assume that it will be completely good to go. It's not the same delivery company, so the CREOG exam is being delivered through a different company than Pearson VUE. But it does give us hope that your test center would be able to administer the exams. It is very positive if they've been able to administer the CREOG because things like firewalls should not be so much of an issue.

Just to clarify, some fellows will be able to take it on the scheduled date, provided the centers are open. Others will be taking it on a different date, and yet others may be able to take it at their institutions. So, is that three options, not one or another?

GW: There's another option. You can take it the following year. The opportunities if you will, and rather than looking at them as alternatives, are to take the exam in June as is scheduled, or if you choose to or if your exam is cancelled, then the options are to take the exam on the alternate date, to take it the next year on the available date, or to potentially take a proctored exam at your institution if your institution, or one near you, offers it and would allow you to take it.

I caution that this is unlike the CREOG exam in that many of our IT and administrative staff have been furloughed. IT staff are currently limited to clinical support. We may have a willingness to assist with the exam, but do not control IT staffing.

GW: We're aware of that. We didn't mean to imply that it's like the CREOG exam, except that it's the format of having what's called a browser-based examination, and if one is familiar with that, this is the best way to explain to someone what it would be like. That's really the only familiarity. This is a high-stakes exam, and the CREOG exam is what's called a formative exam, and it's got less security needs and less requirement that the content be exposed potentially during the day or during the serial exams.

Will the fellows' Program Directors/Program Managers get an email to let them know of different locations offering the exam and their guidelines?

GW: That comes from Pearson VUE, not from us. To the extent that those new centers are open that are the franchise sites, that would be available on their site. How we're going to display what's available for client proctoring is something still to be determined, if we offer that. That would be available on the Pearson site, not anything on the ABOG site.

With states and hospitals having different policies on masking and social distancing, how will you standardize test taking environments? Will you require all test takers to wear masks?

GW: There's two levels on this. One is the Pearson center. The Pearson center follows whatever the local orders are, whether that be the local order, the state order, or CDC guidelines. Those are published on their website. The ones that they own follow very strict guidelines and those are outlined there about being symptom free, having your temperature taken, you will be wearing a mask, and you will be offered to wear gloves, and you'll have to social distance for the June exam.

How those will play out later in the year is still to be determined. They also will not allow you in to take the exam if you've been in close contact with someone who's infected with COVID-19 or if you have any symptoms. The one thing Pearson does say is that each of the individual franchise sites has the ability to set their own standards and some of those are in institutions that may have their own standards. They may not even be open. We know there's about 2,000 sites, but we have no idea to what extent they're even going to be open. That option may not help a lot.

If the question revolved around what kind of guidelines will there be if you're going to do client proctoring, we will put some guidance in our document about that. We hope that you will be following your institution's policies on social distancing and personal protection and infection control.

Our goal is that no one should be at any risk at all to take a voluntary certification exam. If the local, the institution, or the site don't seem safe, then we would strongly advise people not to schedule an exam there or take an exam there.

If the candidate has taken care of a COVID-positive patient in the two weeks prior to the exam, will they be disallowed to sit for the exam or only if there's exposure without appropriate PPE?

GW: That's exactly the point that we're trying to make with Pearson VUE right now. Pearson VUE has to be a responsible employer, and as a non-medical, non-essential business, they have to meet standards for their staff, and they have a very strict interpretation of things that would

preclude any of their employees from becoming inadvertently exposed. We've made very passionate or pointed comments about what it means to take care of patients with PPE on in controlled circumstances in healthcare institutions and they've taken that under advisement.

There may be some ability for us to have an interpretation of that for our exams. That decision is made by Pearson VUE, not by us.

The site provides general OB GYN exam and fellowship exams. Is there one set of fees that covers both exams or a separate fee for each exam?

GW: If the question is, is there are honorarium for proctoring the exam on one day and on the other day, the answer is yes. There'll be a separate honorarium or compensation for each of the days separately. It can go to one person, it can go to two people, it could be used to offset the proctoring if it's going to be done in a centralized area too.

WL: If the question was, are we going to charge a fee to you or to Pearson VUE to proctor to provide the exam, no. There's no additional fee. The candidates have already paid this fee. There will be no additional fee for the examination whatsoever to the candidates.

GW: There are different fees we have to pay to Pearson VUE to administer exams in different forms. The extra costs of this increased flexibility is something that our organization is just going to absorb.

Would IT fees be reimbursed for both the specialty and subspecialty exams?

GW: Yes.

WL: One of the things that would be very helpful for us, would be for you to let us know in that survey what IT fees you anticipate to be charged.

GW: I think we have to be very candid. If a fee is \$5,000 for an event to offer an examination for one candidate, I'm not sure we're going to be able to do that. If they are reasonable and we can afford them, we'll try to work with the institution and you all as best we can.

We understand no one should do our exam and put them on for us for free, but we're trying to do the best we can in the circumstances.

Can a survey that's already been submitted be changed?

WL: If you need your survey to be changed, if you can email Dawn Henning, dhenning@abog.org or exams@abog.org, we can help you with that.

How long is the subspecialty examination, or how much time should be allocated for the examination?

WL: The exam is three hours and 45 minutes. There is some setup required on the part of the proctor, so I would recommend that the proctor would allocate four and a half hours total for the examination.

That doesn't include if you have any candidates who require an accommodation for lactation or for extra time during the exam. What I will say is that we completely understand that you may be able to provide a client proctored exam at the normal time allowed, but you may not be able to provide extra time for lactation or extra time for a double time accommodation, and that's fine.

We really will be working with you individually to determine what it is that you can provide if we go with the client proctored option. We don't have an expectation that everybody must provide exactly the same thing.

But about four and a half hours total would allow you to have the proctor open up everybody's exam, get them started, administer the examination, and then maybe a little less than that if your candidates take a little less time than the three hours and 45 minutes.

How do we confirm identity when everyone is wearing masks?

GW: Lot's of people wear facial things during other exams. I don't think that's going to be an issue. We'll ask them to provide several forms of ID that will be pretty standard. That's probably one of the reasons many places will not want to take candidates they don't know. If the question is about infection control and possible exposure, to the best you can, I would try to minimize those. If that's an issue, then maybe they shouldn't be a proctored site.

Just to clarify, our fellow's scheduled for June 26th at Pearson VUE. If we were to proctor the test at the institution, it will also need to be on June 26th, correct?

GW: Yes.

When will you expect to know if we can proctor the exams?

GW: Soon. It's the easy answer to that. We're trying to find out one, that Pearson VUE can set this up for us within a short period of time. Two, we needed to assess over this week the interest, enthusiasm, capability, and capacity to do that, and we're learning that through the survey and through the call today.

We hope to be able to make an announcement soon, maybe by the end of this week or early next week.

Can the proctor leave the exam room for personal reasons?

GW: I would say that's what the proctor's supposed to do. Somebody should be there. That's what proctors do. I would talk to your residency director and see how they proctor the CREOG exam, but in general, there should always be somebody in the room.

There are things that you can do, there are things people can do to photograph screens. People can come in with microphones and have questions, where they can dictate questions to other people. I don't think security is a huge problem in our assessments, but part of that's because maintenance of security is quite high.

I would urge you that that's what the proctor honorarium is for so that you'll be there, but if you need to go out briefly, go to the restroom or something like that, that's probably reasonable.

The general surgery Qualifying Exam is now virtual at home. Is that a consideration?

GW: We've discussed that and rejected that. There's a lot of reasons to not have a virtual exam at home. We put that in the email, we've talked about it a lot. We would have to totally rewrite every form for the exam for next year. There is not security on those. It's well known how to cheat the system when you take those at home. A Qualifying Exam that's delivered remotely at home is really subject to a lot of psychometric challenges for its defense because there are a lot of ways to cheat on that.

There are industry standards, and the virtual remote proctoring at high-stakes exams does not meet standards. I'm not exactly sure if general surgery is doing that for all of their exams or some of them. They made that decision; they made that obviously knowing what the pros and cons are.

Our board instructed us that that was not a pathway to take this year when we talked about it.

GW: Thank you. If there are no other questions, we appreciate you taking the time to be on the call. We're trying to do our best in adjusting to a changing situation and predicting what is going to happen at the end of June, seven to eight weeks away from now. This may not be our last call, and we will do our best to reply to you and let you know what the changes are as they go forward.

Thank you all for your attention. Please feel free to contact us if there are any other issues that come in the interim and we'll be in contact soon. Thanks.