

Transition to a Virtual Exam

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WL– Dr. Wilma Larsen

CA – Cariel Apodaca

PS – Dr. Pooja Shivraj

CA: Good afternoon, everyone. In the interest of time, it is one o'clock, so we'll go ahead and get started. I imagine people will kind of keep coming in over the next few minutes while we kick this off, but first I'd like to begin by welcoming everyone, so thank you so much for joining us for this webinar on the transition to virtual for this 2021 Specialty Certifying Exams.

My name is Cariel Apodaca. I am the Exams Manager here at ABOG. With me today are Dr. Wilma Larsen, our Associate Executive Director in charge of exams, and she will be primarily leading the webinar, and Dr. Pooja Shivraj, our Manager of Research and Psychometrics at ABOG. At this time, I will turn it over to Dr. Larsen.

WL: Thank you, Cariel.

Okay, I would also like to welcome everyone. I'm going to be talking today a little bit about the Specialty Certifying Examination, which all of you are aware is being given virtually for the 2021 cycle, which includes November, December, and then two weeks in January of 2022.

So these are the dates of the exams, and the first group, the November candidates, should receive their specific dates of when during the week they're going to be examined no later than Monday, but they may receive that this week. We're working hard to get that out to you as quickly as possible. And then these are the rest of the dates for the remainder of the cycle.

And because we're doing this virtually, and therefore not everyone is in the same time zone, we will be doing this on a different schedule than when we have the exams in Dallas. As you can see here, in the morning, your registration will be at 9:15 to 10, first session would be from 10 to 11. You will then have a 15-minute break from 11 to 11:15. Your second session, or second hour, then another break and then your third hour.

For the afternoon candidates the registration will take place between 1:45 and 2:30, first session will be from 2:30 to 3:30, and then you can see the rest of the schedule there. Again, you have a break between your first and second session and between your second and third session.

Each of the hours or sessions will be the same: the first 30 minutes will be on structured cases and the second 30 minutes will be on your case list. You will have three hours, and during the time of the exam, you will stay in the same Zoom room throughout the entire time and the examiners will come in and out of your room to examine you.

There are some minimal technical requirements for the examination. Your operating system needs to be at least Windows 10, and if you're taking the exam on a Mac, at least it needs to be Mac OS 10.11 Mavericks or higher. The audio and video, you have to have them. You need working speakers and a microphone, but that can be either integrated or external, and you need to have a web camera. But again, that can be either integrated or external.

Probably the most important technical requirement is your internet connection speed. It needs to be 50 megabytes per second or greater than 5 megabits. And that's very testable. Just go to where you're going to take the exam and go to fast.com and it'll tell you exactly what your internet speed is from that location.

The screen resolution needs to be at least 1280x720 or higher, and during the exam, we recommend that your computer be plugged into the power source so that you don't lose power during the examination.

You must download Zoom client for meetings onto your computer if you haven't already done so, and you may not take the exam on either a tablet device or a phone, so make sure that you have a laptop or a desktop to take the examination.

Just to alleviate any concerns about information security, no personal information will be transmitted or requested by the ABOG team. There is not any open source or third-party software involved in taking the exam other than Zoom, which is obviously one of the most common softwares used these days, so you do need to have that downloaded.

Now although I've told you what the minimum requirements are, there are some technical ideals. So an external monitor with a large screen, it does allow for easier viewing of images if there happens to be images during your session. If you are using external monitor with a laptop, you will be asked to close your laptop, however, because you're only allowed one monitor for the examination so that we can ensure that you're only looking at Zoom.

It may be ideal to have a headset with a microphone, and as well as an external high-definition camera. And the ideal screen resolution would be 1920x1080. So these would be ideals, but they're not the minimums, and ABOG will not ask you to buy any new equipment if you can meet all of the minimums.

Prior to the exam, you do need to schedule an appointment with ABOG for a tech check to make sure that your system does meet our minimum requirements. Now the links to schedule those appointments were distributed to the November candidates on the 15th of September and to everybody else on the 24th of September. You must perform a tech check prior to your examination day, and you must perform that on the computer taking the exam on, as well as the location that you're planning to take the exam. It's not beneficial to you to do your tech check at your office if you're planning to take the exam from your home because we need to see that your internet works appropriately.

Additionally, prior to the exam, you have to watch the orientation video, which will be on your ABOG portal. It will be in the Media Files, and you're going to receive an email when that is available to you to explain to you how to access it.

You will also need to sign the Terms of Agreement on your ABOG portal, and this is extremely important because you can't take the exam if you don't sign the agreement. It will be on your portal one week prior to the examination, and we will send out a reminder asking you to sign it. You simply go in and sign the form electronically, and that's all that you need to do, but it is critical that you do that.

A de-identified copy of your case list that has been downloaded from the ABOG website. It has to be de-identified, and it will be checked during the registration process to make sure that you don't have any notes on it or any patient information other than the required submissions to ABOG.

During the examination of the case list, it will be a Zoom meeting. There will not be any screen sharing going on, but during the examination of the structured case portion, the cases will be shared over Zoom by the examiner for you to look at.

After the exam, you're going to be asked to fill out a survey on the process. This is very important. We did this after the virtual exam in April, and it was very helpful to us. We were able to improve our processes based on that survey, and so we would ask you to complete that as well.

And then we will be releasing the exam results four weeks from the Friday of exam week using the new grading model. You will receive an email when your results are posted, so please just wait for that email. No matter how many times you check the website during that Friday, it won't make the results come up any faster.

Now I mentioned the new grading and scoring model which is the Multi-Facet Rasch Model that has been instituted here at ABOG. It's an analytical model which accounts for both examiner severity and case difficulty when calculating the candidate's score, and as mentioned, it will take up to four weeks, and the reason for that is it does require psychometric analysis.

Both of your examiners are going to score you on each of your structured cases, as well as the case list during the examination, and then the scores will be analyzed based on case difficulty and examiner severity so that if you have a particularly difficult test day or particularly harsh examiner, that will be accounted for. That will help to determine the fair average or cut score

that's determined after analysis. If your cut score then is greater than the adjusted cut score, you pass.

And in addition to everything I mentioned, to try to make the scoring as fair as possible, we also take a 95 percent confidence interval around the cut score to account for measurement error. So as long as you score within that 95 percent confidence interval, even if you don't quite reach the cut score, you would pass the exam. We did utilize this for the 2021 Subspecialty CEs, and the pass rates were not significantly different than what they've been for the last number of years.

So those are all the slides that I'm going to present with you today, but we would be happy to answer any questions. Pooja is here in case there's anything that I can't answer of a psychometric nature, and I'm certainly happy to answer anything that you might have a question on regarding the exam itself.

Without purchasing an external webcam, if you're using a laptop with an integrated camera but also a large monitor to see images, if we close our laptop, then that will turn off our camera. Has ABOG considered this?

WL: Yes. You won't be allowed to do that. You can only have one monitor going during the exam, so if you choose to use your integrated laptop camera, then you have to use your laptop monitor. That is the policy. If you choose to, you can certainly purchase a webcam if that's your preference, but you can only have one monitor during the examination.

Thank you for the information. I signed up for a tech consultation, and this is the meeting that was scheduled for me. Is there another tech meeting I need to schedule?

WL: Yes, you absolutely do. This was the webinar that was on the email that was sent to you, but there's another link to what's called a tech check. It's a 15-minute meeting with a technical person that's just going to go through your computer and technical requirements with you. So if you look at the information that you were sent, you should find that as part of it a link to schedule that appointment.

Can you explain more how the psychometric analysis works?

WL: I'll explain briefly, and when you get your results, you'll get a much more comprehensive explanation. But basically, what we do is, your score, as well as the case severity and the examiner level difficulty, are transformed into a logit score that therefore, they're all able to be analyzed on the same scale. That allows us to account for the case level of difficulty, as well as the examiner severity. Then those are transformed back and compared to the cut score. Anything you'd like to add, Pooja?

PS: No. And if you would like to look it up in the literature, it's called the Multi-Facet Rasch Model, and it'll give you more detail.

CA: There's also a summary on our website for anyone interested, if you just search Multi-Facet Rasch, it'll pull up for you.

Are you doing anything differently for people who are breastfeeding and need to pump?

WL: Yes, we are. The breastfeeding accommodation is being given. What will happen is you'll go in and you'll complete your registration, and then you'll be given an opportunity to breastfeed at that point. So if for most people, it ends up being about 30 minutes. There is a wait for most people in between the time the registration occurs and the time the exam starts. We explain that thoroughly in the candidate manual. The reason for that is that in the April exams, there were people who had such significant technical issues that we were barely able to get them into the exam on time, so we do give more time than we think we'll need, and that will be the time that anyone who needs the lactation accommodation will be able to breastfeed.

Can we reschedule a tech check if we already did one, just in case we need to use a new device?

WL: Yes, you can do that.

CA: If you need to do that, it is the same link that you used to schedule the tech check initially. You would just click on it and reschedule another one.

Will the test be recorded?

WL: No, the tests aren't being recorded, so you won't see any sort of recording. The red button in the upper left corner won't be on, nor will you receive a recording announcement, so we are not recording any of the exams.

What's the backup plan if the connection or power does go out and the exam cannot be completed?

WL: So we definitely dealt with that in April, and essentially, there are a number of backups. So from your standpoint as the candidate, obviously, you need to be as prepared as possible, but we know that things will happen, such as Zoom outages, internet outages, and power going out.

From our standpoint, if that happens on the examiner side, we replace the examiner within a very short period of time so the exam can continue. From your side, you need to do everything you can, if that occurs, to get try to get back into the examination process. We do have extra slots at the end of the week, but if you were to be taking your exam on the last day of a week, we wouldn't be able to reschedule you for that month. We would have to move into the next month.

Fortunately, in April, we did not have a single person who had to be rescheduled to a different day. We did have one person who the candidate lost power and actually lost internet connection, but it was due to power was not able to get back in, but we were able to complete their exam on the same day. We just shifted it a little bit and did it later in the afternoon. So we've been very fortunate, knock on wood, as far as April was concerned, and hopefully that will continue. But, we do have extra slots towards the end of the week in case that happens and we have to reschedule someone.

CA: Dr. Larsen, did you want to talk about the 10-minute buffer that we also built in?

WL: Sure. So we did because of the fact that we're doing this electronically and not in person, we did build that break in that we mentioned, and that gives us a buffer, so if we have to, things can shift a little bit and we can complete an exam hour and keep you on track as far as time is concerned.

Will we have access to pen and paper during the exam?

WL: You'll be allowed to bring in a notebook, and it'll be checked to make sure you haven't written anything in, it as well as a pen or pencil. Or, you can bring in a small white word with a marker, whichever you prefer.

If our internet speed did not meet the minimum requirements during the tech check, do we need to repeat the check prior to the exam?

WL: My recommendation would be that you correct your internet, and then you repeat the tech check to ensure that you will be fine during the exam As far as from a technical standpoint.

CA: We also emailed the, which you should have received, if your internet speed did not meet requirements, you should have received a second tech check link to go to our tier two support to help you troubleshoot some of that internet connectivity, as well.

Do you recommend any particular place to take the exam for better internet? For example, a hotel.

WL: We don't have any specific recommendation other than you need to meet the minimum requirements. Candidates in April took it from their offices, they took it from their home, some people did take it from a hotel. But whatever you need to do to ensure that your internet connectivity is adequate, that would be what we recommend. And as Cariel said, if you don't meet it, you'll have a second appointment with us, but at a higher level of technical expertise to try to help you to get to the point you need to be.

Will you take into account if a person lives on the east coast versus west coast when scheduling the exam in a morning or evening session?

WL: So that's why we've made the exams start when they do, was to take into account the time differences. We do take into account if a person is overseas or if they're in Hawaii, and we make sure we schedule them into the appropriate session for the time difference.

Will we be meeting our examiners during the exam and be able to see their faces, or will it be anonymous?

WL: It'll be just like what you see here where you have a proctor, although the proctor screen will be off, there will be a proctor during your exam that will be monitoring the exam, both for technical issues and security issues, and then you'll have two examiners, and you will see their faces unless they lose connectivity for some reason. Just like when I shared my screen, we became small and off to the side, the same thing will happen during the structured cases, where you'll still be able to see your examiners, but the picture will be smaller and off to one side.

CA: We have a couple of requests, Dr. Larsen, to show the schedule for the exam day again, if you're able to, if you still have that up.

WL: Yep, just give me one sec here.

So this is the morning schedule. So again, registration starting at 9:15, and the first session starting at 10 finishing at 1:30.

And this is the afternoon time frame.

CA: I think you addressed this, but I want to just make sure, if somebody needs an additional tech check for any reason, so whether their location's changing or they're checking the computers or they've changed their internet speed and they want to make sure that it works

just to confirm, they can use the same link that they scheduled the first time to reschedule another tech check if needed.

WL: That's correct.

You said that we should receive the link on 9/24 for our exam date. What link was that for?

WL: No, if you're a November candidate, you receive the link for the tech check on the 15th, and then if you're a December or January candidate, you receive the link on the 24th.

If we're taking the exam in our office, do we need to remove any textbooks and bookshelves? Should the room be pretty bare?

WL: So you do need to take out anything that identifies where you work or where you train, so any diplomas or any things like that. Anything that has an identification of your current position. Those need to be removed from your background. We do not allow any type of virtual background for the exams, and that has to do with security as well as internet access.

As far as the textbooks, no, you don't need to take them off your bookshelves. When we do the room sweep looking to make sure that there are no security concerns, they'll just say please don't open those, please don't move those, but you don't have to remove them. If you do have a TV, we ask that it be unplugged, and then as mentioned, you can only use one monitor.

If I have a second monitor, do I need to remove those from the room?

WL: No they can just unplug it from the wall and unplug it from the first monitor so that it's clear that it can't be used.

CA: I think that's kind of the summary on the background.

How is examiner severity determined?

WL: So in a nutshell, very briefly, an examiner severity is based on looking at how a particular examiner grades candidates in relation to how other examiners grade the same candidate. So a candidate has a baseline level of ability. A number of examiners are going to put in scores on that person. If an examiner always scores a candidate lower than all their contemporaries, they would be a more severe examiner. If they always score them higher, they would be a more lenient examiner. So it's based on comparison in between the case severity, the examiner ability, and then the candidate. Anything you want to add, Pooja?

There's a tech check form I'm assuming I need to fill this in during the tech check, and where do I need to upload it?

WL: You don't need to upload it. During the tech check, the person that's doing the tech check will ask you each part of the form, but then they'll fill that in on a spreadsheet so that we have your information.

For the case list sessions, I will just flip to the case being discussed in my de-identified list, the examiner will say refer to patient number X. Is this correct? Do I need to have a printed copy of my case list?

WL: You absolutely must have a printed copy of your case list for the exam. It cannot have patient initials on it, but it can have the other information that you've submitted. It just can't be the one that you take to your medical records room to be assigned that has the patient initials. And yes, the examiner will say, "Please flip to page six, the second patient down. We're going to talk about x, y, or z."

CA: Yeah, and just kind of based on some feedback that we got from the April exams, you can print two different copies of your case list. The ones that your examiners will have are the de-identified copies. If you print the de-identified copy, you should have the same list that your examiners will have, so when you go log in to look at it, you should see that. If you have any questions, please you know, feel free to email us, but that should all be on your on your ABOG portal.

If we would like to change our exam date to a different date, are these requests being taken into consideration?

WL: I'm not sure if you're asking about a different day or a different month. Obviously, the months are set at this point. We did honor many requests to move people around. As far as the day of the week, that will depend on what your reason is. We will you'll need to email us at exams@abog.org with your specific situation.

Are AirPods an acceptable external microphone/headphone setup?

WL: AirPods or a microphone and headphones like what Cariel is wearing, I think that the one that Cariel and Pooja are wearing may work a little better than the AirPods. We're not going to dictate, however, what you choose to use. You just need to be able to be heard and make sure you're wearing it during the tech check so that they can make sure that the volume is appropriate.

When will we find out what day and in what group, morning versus afternoon, we'll be taking the exam?

WL: It's no more than four weeks prior to your exam date. So for the November candidates, that's next Monday, and you'll receive an email either next Monday or it could be tomorrow or Friday.

CA: Not sure if you mentioned, so Dr. Larsen, you talked about the expectations for the virtual testing space, but can you speak to whether there's a room or environment check during the registration process?

WL: Yes. And all of this, by the way, just so everyone knows, the candidate manual that you receive goes into all aspects of this in detail. So if you forget something, oh and this webinar will be available, there will be a recording of this, it'll be available to all candidates to re-watch if you choose to.

So yes, there will be a room check, a room scan, during the registration part of the exam. If you have an external camera, that will be used. If you don't, then you'll be asked to sign in to Zoom

on your phone. Once you've finished the room scan, then your phone will be removed from the testing area, turned off and removed, so yes, there will be a scan that's done prior to the start of the examination.

Are we able to have water with us?

WL: Yes, you can have any beverage that you would like, and that's the only thing you can take out of or bring into the room during the exam process.

I scheduled a tech check but have not received a confirmation email. Should I have received one?

WL: Yes, you should have, so please email us at exams@abog.org so that Cariel can check into that for you.

Will we need to share our screen during the exam?

WL: No, you will not need to share your screen. The examiners will be sharing their screens with you during the structured cases, but all they will see from you is your photo.

I live in a rural town and I'm concerned about internet connection? Has anyone planned to do the exam in a hotel?

WL: I believe there were a number of people that made that decision during the April exams, and I would suspect that people will make that decision during the upcoming exams as well.

How many tech checks do we have to do prior to the test, and how close to the exam date should we watch the videos prior to the exam?

WL: So you only have to do one tech check if you pass. If you do not pass, then automatically, we will schedule a second one for you.

As far as the videos are concerned, there are two different videos. There's one set of three videos, which are basically about getting ready for the exam and taking the exam from a technical standpoint. Those can be watched anytime between now and your exam. And there is a second video, which is the normal candidate orientation that I give in person when the exams are in person. That will have to be watched sometime prior to the exam. I would recommend that you watch it probably a week prior to the exam or so. It is not yet posted on your portal. It will be posted sometime in the early part of October.

Are there any changes to timing or number of candidates per day for the virtual format?

WL: There are no changes in regard to the number of candidates per day. Those are scheduled according to how many candidates we have for the exam total. There are changes on the time of day that the exam is being administered because of the time zones across the United States, so we're starting later than we normally do, and therefore ending later. And we've put the break in, which adds an extra 30 minutes to the total exam time.

Are the examiners in the same time zone as the candidate being tested?

WL: Not necessarily. In fact, because of conflicts, which is you can't be examined by somebody that's co-located where you are or that trained you, they well may be at different time zones.

If we're in the last exam week, will there be a backup plan for the extra slots for technical difficulties?

WL: So the worst situation would be the last day and the second week of exams in the afternoon to have technical difficulties where you can't be examined. If that were to occur, we would deal with it on a one-by-one individual basis. As I mentioned, in April, we gave 500, I didn't say the number, but we gave 505 exams without a single candidate not being examined on the day they were scheduled. So we're hopeful that we will continue with that in the future.

Is there a program that supports opening the manuals that were emailed?

CA: They're PDFs, so any program that will open a PDF will open the manual. I know that some people may have had a little bit of trouble opening the tech check form because it was a fillable form, but it shouldn't have impacted your ability to open the manual. Any PDF viewer will let you do that.

WL: And if you don't have a PDF viewer, you can download Acrobat Reader for free, and if you're on a Mac, Mac has a number of PDF viewer programs that you can download for free on the Apple store.

Are we allowed to use our computer's clock during the exam?

WL: Yes, but there will actually be a clock that will be in the room, so it will appear as a fourth window. You see three windows here with the three pictures. There would be a fourth window, and that will have a clock that is basically timing the exam, and that's for your benefit, as well as the examiners.

Have the questions been adjusted to account for not having a fetal/pelvic model? A lot of things are much easier to describe if they could be demonstrated, rather than speaking through it.

WL: There won't be any questions on the exam that require the fetal/pelvic model to in order to answer them.

Is there a number that will be available for us to call if we have a technical issue?

WL: Yes. It's basically the main ABOG number with an extension. That is listed in the candidate manual. It's the very last page of the manual. It has some cell phone numbers that you can access, so yes.

And the other thing that I mentioned, but I didn't really go into detail, there's a proctor in every room that is there for both technical support as well as security. And so if you were to have technical problems, they would immediately call us and let us know that. So we have multiple

ways that we're being informed. And what happened most commonly during the April exams is, if a candidate or an examiner had technical difficulties, we usually called them before they even had time to try to call us so we could try to help them re-establish their connectivity.

Who should we notify if we're living overseas to have the appropriate exam session scheduled?

WL: Exams@abog.org, and you need to do that as soon as possible.

I know you mentioned the webinar will be shared, but will the PowerPoint also be shared?

WL: The PowerPoint will be shared as a separate entity, but the webinar, you'll receive a link. Everybody will get an email from us at ABOG with a link in it to go to watch the webinar as often as you'd like.

What do we do during the 45-minute registration time?

WL: So the first part of that time period will be registration, and if you're fortunate and you're not someone who ends up having some technical issues, which again, we use that 45 minutes because we found that there was a fairly significant, I'm going to say five to 10 percent of candidates had some sort of technical issue in logging in during the registration process where they needed extra time, more than the 15 to 20 minutes that it actually takes for the registration. Once the registration is complete, you have to keep your camera and your audio on for the remainder of your exam time. If you need to use the restroom, you are able to leave the room and do so, and you're able to study your case list, but you can't take any notes or make any annotations. Otherwise, you just have to sit there and wait. We understand that that is not something people want to do, but if you are the candidate who needs every single one of those 45 minutes to get on to the examination, then you're very happy that we factored that in.

Is there a dress code for the exam?

WL: There is a dress code for examiners. Examiners are expected to dress professionally. We don't dictate a dress code for candidates. I would say use your best judgment.

Are we allowed to look at study materials and or electronics during the breaks?

WL: You are allowed to leave the room during the breaks. We specifically say that we do not want you accessing the internet or study materials during the breaks. Obviously, we're not going to be where you are taking the exam and there's no way for us to police that, but you're on your honor for that.

Will the examiners be part of room check or just a proctor? Is our diploma is okay if they can't be seen during the exam? So like if they're on a side wall, is that okay?

WL: Yeah, that's fine. Again, it's just what's directly behind you that we're concerned about. So your diplomas, if they're on a sidewall in your office, that's fine. If I turned my virtual background off, you would not be able to see anything that would indicate where I trained or where I work, but I have my diplomas up in my office, as many people do.

As far as the room check, it will be the proctor. It will not be the examiners. The examiners will come into the room about two minutes before the start of the exam. They'll introduce themselves and they'll begin the exam.

Are there still lactation breaks built in?

WL: So the lactation accommodation is only prior to the start of the exam. That's the way it has always been. So when we're giving the exams here at the ABOG office, you're given approximately 30 minutes for lactation prior to the start of the exam. That is similar for the lactation for this examination. You will have a 15-minute break in between sessions, so if you chose to use that for lactation, you certainly could.

So to clarify, we could take this from our home in our bedroom at a desk? Or would that be viewed as unprofessional if my bed is behind me?

WL: People have to take this from a number of locations. We do not view it as unprofessional if you need to take it from your home. We do actually address this with the examiners to specifically state that should not be considered during the evaluation process, that the location of the candidate should not be considered because we know people have to take it in a lot of different situations.

Just to confirm that during breaks between sessions, we keep our laptop and everything on and leave to come back to start the next session?

WL: That's correct. From the time that you finish your registration, you have to leave everything on until the exam is finished.

CA: And the leave is not leave the Zoom room. You're welcome to leave the room, but the Zoom room stays on the whole time.

WL: Thank you.

How is doing the exam virtual differ from in person from our perspective? Is it slightly easier for the candidate?

WL: So as I mentioned before, we will be asking you to complete a survey. In the surveys that we did for the April exams, we asked candidates that specific question. Because these were subspecialty exams, so all the candidates had taken an oral exam before and since this was our first virtual exam, they'd all taken it in person, and the the response was mixed. Some candidates felt like they were more relaxed. Other candidates felt like they were more nervous because of the technical aspects of the exam.

Can ABOG get us our actual date sooner? It's hard given we have patience and shifts already booked three months out in advance.

WL: So we do understand that, but unfortunately, we try to get that out to you as soon as we possibly can. It's a very complicated process. From the time that we release what week you're given, I'm going to guess we've received probably a hundred people that asked us to change their week this year that we had to deal with first, and then of course, there are examiner and candidate conflicts that we have to resolve. And so we do do this as quickly as possible. Our hope is that someday we'll be able to do it in a more automated fashion where we can get the specific dates out sooner, but right now, this is the best we can do.

I received the email about scheduling tech checks on 9/21 instead of 9/24 that you just discussed, although my exam is January. Is it okay or is it different?

CA: What happened there is we wanted to give November candidates enough time to schedule, but even after they had scheduled, there was a lot of availability with our tech check associates, and so we sent the link early, and I didn't update the slide deck. So yes, you probably received it on September 21st, not the 24th, and that was my mistake.

Are there any considerations for switching exam month considered at this point if we email with our circumstance?

WL: You're welcome to email us with your circumstance. We will have to deal with it on an individual basis. I will not guarantee that we can accommodate you at this point.

Can you repeat if paper and pen are allowed?

WL: Yes, you're allowed to bring in notebook paper and a pen or pencil that will be inspected prior to the start of the exam. And actually, I didn't mention this earlier, but when the exam is finished, you'll be asked to tear up any notes that you've taken in front of the proctor and dispose of them for security reasons. But yes, alright. The other option was you can bring in a small whiteboard with a marker if you choose to.

Is there a room scan after breaks? If we have an internal webcam, can we bring our phone back in for the room scan?

WL: There sometimes is a room scan after breaks and your proctor will ask you to bring your phone in if they need you to.

Do we receive a confirmation email after the tech check?

WL: No, they should have told you at the time of the tech check that you passed.

Well, if you didn't, they should have told you that.

Will the examiners will see my video or just the picture that I uploaded?

WL: No they'll see your video. The picture is for our records. Normally, that is used to print your badge that you would have if you came to the ABOG offices in person, but they will see your video. You will have to keep your video on throughout the course of the exam.

I just moved from the midwest to the west coast. Should I call ABOG to confirm they know that I'm on the west coast now?

WL: You don't need to call us. Please just email us at exams@abog.org. Also, please go into your portal and update your information if you've not done so, because we pull all of our data out of our portal, and so if you can keep things updated in that, that makes sure that we know how to reach you, if we need to your cell phone number, your email, those sorts of things.

Do the examiners know who they're examining ahead of time? What happens if you end up with an examiner that you do know?

WL: So the examiners find out who they're examining a short time ahead of when the exam occurs. We have a very sophisticated computer program that looks at everything we know about you, as well as everything about the examiners to preclude any conflicts so that you're not scheduled with someone who's trained you. You certainly could be scheduled with someone you've met before who's given grand rounds at where you did your residency, or if

you're in a fellowship where you are now in your fellowship, and that's fine. That's not considered a conflict. But anyone who you're a close friend with or who's trained you would be considered a conflict. Our system wouldn't know who your close friends or mentors are, but the examiners would know that, and they would recuse themselves if we paired them with you.

Can I do a tech check now in the room where I plan to give the exam and then take the things out of the room prior to the exam? So things like a bed or extra chairs? Do I have to use the same computer for tech check and the exam?

WL: As far as the same computer, you need to use the same computer for the tech check in the exam so that we know that you the equipment that you have is going to work. As far as taking things out of the room, sure. The tech check doesn't have anything to do with that. They're just trying to make sure that your equipment works and it meets the standard that we're asking for.

What manuals were sent? I don't think I received anything yet?

WL: Well, when I say manual, it's just a document that's called the candidate manual, and it has a lot of information about taking the exam, what is needed, it has a timeline leading up to the exam, those sorts of things.

CA: It was sent with the same email where the link for this webinar was included, if that helps anybody find it, and if you don't have it, please email exams@abog.org and ask for it. We're happy to resend.

I will be using a Mac. Have you had any issues with use of Mac?

WL: Not from the standpoint of the candidates, no.

What's the media section you refer to for the videos on the ABOG website?

WL: You go on your ABOG portal and log in. To the right of your name, there's a blue box with three white lines in it. If you click on that box, the drop-down menu will appear and one of those will be Media Files, and you click on that, and that's what we're talking about.

During the 15-minute break between sessions, are we allowed to use the restroom, or do we have to stay in the room the entire time?

WL: No, you absolutely are allowed to use the restroom. You're allowed to get yourself additional beverage if you need it, that sort of thing.

I wasn't able to open the manual despite having Adobe. Is it available on the ABOG website?

WL: You know, the manual is not available on the ABOG website, but we certainly could post it there. That's a good idea. There's nothing secret about it. It's a publication that we developed to give you information on the exams, so we could certainly post it to the website.

How can you call us if there's a tech issue if our phones will be off? Do you want us to keep it right outside the room, or if there's not a secure place to leave it, can we put it in a drawer in the room?

WL: So we have had not dealt with that as an issue before. I guess what I would say is that if you're in a place where you couldn't leave your phone outside the room, turning it off and putting in a drawer might be considered acceptable.

We just haven't had to deal with that. As you see when you read the manual though, is what we ask is that if you do have technical issues and you're not able to log back in that you go and get your phone and turn it on. That's the first thing we ask you to do, so that's how we would be able to communicate with you and you would be able to communicate with us.

If we need to pump, can we leave the room during the registration screen time?

WL: Yes, as soon as you're done with the registration, your proctor will actually know if you've asked for the lactation accommodation, and they will encourage you to go ahead and take that.

So to confirm, there's a proctor and examiner during each session?

WL: There's a proctor and two examiners, so you will have two examiners during each session. One will question you on the structured cases, one will question you on your case list, and there is a proctor who will register you and then will remain in the room with you during the exam. Because they're human beings and have to do things like go to the bathroom, the proctors may switch out during the exam. Their video will be off and they'll be muted unless they need to speak with you or the examiners, usually due to a technical reason.

Is it okay to have a ring light for better lighting?

WL: Absolutely.

Does the room have to have a closed door? For example, I was planning on taking it in my dining room, which leads to my kitchen.

WL: That's fine. Wherever you need to take it to have your best internet access is fine with us.

I am assuming we can't wear a smart watch, but I'm just double checking.

WL: That's correct. You can't have anything in the room that can access the internet other than your computer, and we will check to make sure the only thing that is open is Zoom.

I did a tech check already. I didn't receive anything saying it was completed.

WL: You will not receive anything. You have been added to our list so that we can have a record of it, but you won't receive anything saying it was completed.

Sorry, this may be off topic, but are there specific resources and materials that ABOG recommends to focus on, especially with regards to structured cases?

WL: No, ABOG does not make any recommendations on how best to study for the exams.

Do the examiners look at the entire case list or just the case list for their portion of the exam? For example, office, GYN, or OB?

WL: There's nothing to preclude the examiners from looking at the entire case list. However, that's not the norm. Most examiners have enough to do that they just look at the area that they're examining.

What about faculty who may have interviewed you for jobs or are currently interviewing you? Is that considered a conflict?

WL: We don't consider it a conflict unless it was acrimonious, but I would say if you're in the process of actively interviewing for someone, I would expect the examiner to recuse themselves. If the situation is such that you feel uncomfortable, let's say you interviewed for a job and you didn't take the job or it wasn't offered, and you feel uncomfortable with that, you can say that that's a conflict and we will certainly deal with it as such. Sometimes, the examiner feels like the situation was not acrimonious at all, but the candidate feels uncomfortable, and certainly, we would respect the candidates judgment on that.

Can you confirm what the Zoom name needs to be listed as?

WL: Yes, it's "Dr. first initial last name". Sorry, it's been a while since April. I've slept in between then, but it's "Dr. first initial capitalized last name". And if you don't know how to switch that, if you just go back and go up to the right of your Zoom screen and click on the three dots, there's a rename button and you can switch it to whatever you'd like.

CA: So there's a couple of notes here, and one's a comment I just want to read out. I think it's really helpful. I didn't realize this is an issue. So apparently the candidate manual, while I sent it and attached it, the PDF didn't get sent through that way, so some people may have to change the document name to .PDF. So if you go into the link that we sent you, save it as a document, change the last part to .PDF, then you should be able to open it on things like Adobe. I didn't realize there was an issue. I will work with our IT department on that. But there's also "Where's the manual found?" and just to note, I will be working with our communications department to get that uploaded in a way that everybody can access it as a PDF from the ABOG website, so thank you all for bringing that to our attention tonight. We do appreciate it.

How long after the tech check should we receive another appointment link if the internet speed wasn't fast enough? I haven't received the link.

WL: Can you please email us then at exams@abog.org so that we can look into that, because it should have been basically right away, so we'll we'll look into that for you.

There's a discrepancy between what my hospital says the speed is and what the speed test showed.

CA: The tier 2 link, they've seen that before and they're prepared to handle it, so we'll get you that link as soon as you email us.

Do you recommend muting when we're not actively speaking?

WL: Yes, only because, well let me let me back up. If you have any problems with sound reverberation during the communication, then we do ask that you mute. We also ask that the examiner that's not speaking stay muted until it's their turn to speak, but if you're not having any echoes or any volume issues, then you don't need to do that.

The examiners are different for each case list, correct? So there's a total of three sessions and six examiners?

WL: That's correct. And I'll go into detail on that on the candidate orientation video that you'll watch before the exam.

When do we find out who our examiners are?

WL: You find out the morning of the exam or afternoon of the exam, depending on what time you're scheduled for. So the proctor will go over those names with you to make sure there aren't any conflicts.

Do we need to fill out the tech check form and send it somewhere? I did the tech check, but it was verbal during the session.

WL: No, you do not need to fill it out and upload it or send it to us. The person that did your check has filled out the information for you in our spreadsheet.

When will we know which topic, OB, GYN, office, will be assigned to each session?

WL: So when the examiners come in the room, they'll introduce themselves and tell you what session they're examining you in.

Is there another option for viewing the media files on the portal? I was unable to view any of them.

CA: I think we can send those. Can you email us please at exams@abog.org. We'll have to have our IT department look into that, and then if we need to provide an alternate way to view it, we can do that as well.

Do we have to look directly at the camera for the entire session? Sometimes looking at the screen allows us to look directly at the examiner.

WL: You just have to be looking in the direction of the screen. What we don't want is for you to be looking off to the side or looking at a spot in your room that is not the screen. And the reason for that is of course security issues. So you know, when we say at the camera, what we really mean is at the screen, because the examiners need to feel comfortable that you're not looking at something else looking down or looking at a spot in your room.

Just to clarify, we can use the inbuilt camera and microphone or do we have to have external ones?

WL: You do not have to have external ones. You can use the built-in ones. You'll just end up using your phone for the room scan, which is absolutely fine.

What's the order of topics? Is it OB, then GYN, then office?

WL: Everybody's different. A third of the people will have OB first, a third will have GYN first, a third will have office first.

So with regards to our case list, we need a printed copy? We cannot have it on the computer screen?

WL: That's correct. The only thing you can have open on your computer screen is the Zoom session.

Are we allowed to look down at our case list when they ask the question about one of the specific cases?

WL: Absolutely. The expectation when you're doing the case list, you're going to have the case list right there in front of you. You're going to be looking at it and turning the pages and all that sort of thing, just like you would if you were back in the day when we used to use the case list in a printed format here in the office. We don't do that anymore. Now, we project on the computer screen when you're here, but we're not able to do that for the virtual format.

CA: And just to reiterate, as part of your registration and your check-in, the tech will go through your case list with you to make sure that there's no writing on it.

Not a question, but thank you and the ABOG team so much for all the hard work and the accommodations that you've made to make this a safer exam for us all.

WL: You're welcome.

So just to confirm, we look at the case list when a question is asked and then look back at the screen, and doing it back and forth like that is fine?

WL: Yes, that is absolutely fine.

There really shouldn't be a lot of reason during the structured cases that you would look away from the screen, but during the case list, of course you will be looking at your case list.

Will the examiners be together in Dallas, or will they also be Zooming in from separate locations?

WL: For November, they will absolutely be Zooming in from separate locations. We haven't made a decision on December or January yet as far as the examiners are concerned. My suspicion is for December, they will also be Zooming in from separate locations, and I'm keeping my fingers crossed that potentially they can be in Dallas for January, but I don't know.

Is there any chance that the exam will be multiple choice questions now for 2021?

WL: No.

So is it okay to look at our pen and paper? For example, if we're asked about differential list or answer looking at the screen?

WL: It is okay to look at your pen and paper. The idea would be that the examiners are going to expect you to interact with them. If you're taking notes, they're going to see that that's all fine. What they don't want to see is that you're, you know, like I said, you're staring at a point in your room that is not the screen, it's not your case list, it's not where you've made any notes. Obviously from our standpoint, it's very difficult for us to assure security during this exam, so we do what we can, but the examiners are in no way unreasonable, and this was not an issue during the virtual exams or during the April exams.

Do the examiners know what their severity reading is?

WL: At this time, no, they don't, because they have not been told that yet. They will know after this set of exams.

Is there any chance the January exam could be moved to in person?

WL: Once we made the decision to move the November candidates to remote, we determined that for fairness to all candidates, they would all need to be remote. So we can't give some of them in person for the candidates and some of them remotely.

So to confirm, we can write on blank notebook but not on the case list? Why would there be a need to have pen and paper? What notes would be needed?

WL: In the ABOG offices, when you take the exams in person, we have pen and paper available so that if you do want to take notes, write a differential as you're speaking, or write down something that the examiner says to help you, if that's how you process. Not everyone will want or need that, and it is okay to write on the blank note paper that you bring in with you.

CA: Yeah, I just want to clarify that that's only during the exam, so when you come in, it has to be blank, not during registration, only during the actual exam will be able to write on your notebook.

Are we required to use a headset for the exam?

WL: You can use the speakers that are built into your system.

How do we change our names on Zoom?

WL: If you go up to where your picture is, if you take your mouse and go up to the right upper corner as you look at the screen, there's three little dots. You click on that, and at the bottom of the menu that comes up is Rename. Click on that and you can rename yourself.

"Will we be given details regarding the new grading scheme that was mentioned?"

WL: If you go on our website and you search for Multi-Faceted Rasch or MFRM, there are plenty of details there that you can go through.

Do we have to get rid of notes between sessions?

WL: No, you do not. You will have to tear them up at the end of the session, at the end of the total exam.

Just to confirm, we can have a bottle of water with us?

WL: That's correct.

Can you repeat what we changed our name to?

WL: "Dr. first initial last name."

If I'm not comfortable with the virtual format, is there any way to postpone the exam to next year?

WL: Yes, just email us at exams@abog.org, and we will help you with that.

CA: Okay, it is two o'clock, Dr. Larsen. If you want to give any closing remarks to end the in the webinar.

WL: Just thanks for joining us today. Again, there will be a recording of this made available to you, so you can re-watch it if you choose to, and we wish all of you the best of luck as you pursue certification. Thank you.