North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination

The North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination® (NAPLEX®) is designed to evaluate general entry-level pharmacy practice knowledge and is taken by recent college of pharmacy graduates shortly after they receive their degree. The exam is also taken by foreign-educated pharmacists who have earned Foreign Pharmacy Graduate Examination Committee™ certification.

The NAPLEX is just one component of the licensure process and is used by the boards of pharmacy to assess a candidate's competence to practice as a pharmacist.

Item Development

- Items (test questions) are written by pharmacists from across the country and from a variety of disciplines during Item Development Workshops.

- Item writers must be actively practicing, preferably patient-facing, pharmacists with an active license in good standing.

- Comprehensive training provided virtually and in person during the item development process educates item writers on robust item writing guidelines and editorial standards.

- NAPLEX items include multiple choice, multiple response (select all that apply), and fill in the blank.

Item Review

- NAPLEX content reviews by NAPLEX Review Committee subject matter experts take place biannually and more frequently as needed.

- Content review is prioritized based on subject matter and psychometric analysis.

- The NAPLEX Review Committee uses a rigorous process to review each individual item for content validity.

- Psychometricians frequently analyze items based on statistical performance and psychometric thresholds for item difficulty and item discrimination.

- All newly written items are pre-tested, and their statistical performance is reviewed before they are promoted to a scored item that can be published on an exam.

Exam Content

- Exam contains clinical content developed to support the NAPLEX Competency Areas (Blueprint).

- Content is streamlined to avoid regional bias and is derived from national pharmacy practice and clinical guidelines.

- Fixed forms are developed by ensuring that the blueprint weights are met, and that content is evenly distributed within each major content area.

- Exams are built to psychometric standards of item type and difficulty to support the NAPLEX Competency Areas (Blueprint).

- Pre-test items are not used to calculate a candidate's exam score. Only scored items are used to calculate a pass or fail on an exam.

- Practice analysis is conducted by surveying actively licensed pharmacists from a variety of disciplines to assign weights to Competency Areas of the exam Blueprint, which is designed to support NABP's mission to protect the public health.

Pass Rates

- Candidate performance reports are broken down by Competency Area of the NAPLEX Blueprint to inform future study efforts for those who fail the exam.

- Variables in the candidate population may impact pass rates.

- NAPLEX pass rates and trends in repeat attempts are similar to trends in Multistate Pharmacy Jurisprudence Examination® pass rates.

- Candidates have a maximum of 5 attempts to pass the NAPLEX unless a board of pharmacy determines otherwise.