Frequently Asked Questions

Practices for Improving Credentialing Examination Results

January 2026

1. Our students struggle to pass the credentialing exam, and our pass rate is low. What can we do?

- Do your evaluation tools, both cognitive and psychomotor, reflect the development of critical thinking and not just recall of information?
- Does your program invest in educational opportunities for the faculty in item development and analysis?
- Do your faculty take advantage of free webinars on item writing and analysis?
- Do your high-stakes exams mirror the types of questions on the credentialing exam?
- Do you practice interweaving of topic review and skills during the program? Interweaving topics and types of activities over time is spacing that engages long-term memory and improves consolidation of memory into knowledge.
- Do your students use study groups as a learning opportunity?
- Does your program include frequent quizzes that challenge students to recall important information?
- Do you offer practice exams towards the end of the program as a review mechanism?
- Does your program provide a meaningful, comprehensive final summative cognitive exam at the conclusion of the capstone field internship?
- Consider if placing the standardized courses (i.e., ACLS, PALS, trauma course) at the end of the program as content review would be more beneficial than incorporating throughout the program.

2. Our program is open enrollment, and we cannot use a selection process. What can we do?

- If your program is in a college, what do other healthcare programs require? Most healthcare programs require pre-testing and/or prerequisites.
- Open enrollment is a choice by the institution and hopefully can be reconsidered. Discuss this with the institution's academic leadership and seek input from the program's Advisory Committee.
- Consider offering a preparatory course before entry into the program; this may include review of EMT level content, math review, A&P review, medical terminology, or other review topics.
- Consider the rigor of the A&P course you use or start requiring A&P as a prerequisite, if not already required.
- Recommend resources for prospective students for remediation in reading, math, and medical terminology.
- Provide a robust orientation detailing program requirements, schedule, time commitment, and other expectations, ideally before the start of the class. Invite the students' significant others so they understand the demands of the program.
- Interview prospective students and hold one-on-one discussions about what is needed to succeed in the program.

- Develop robust wrap-around support services for students to include access to tutoring services, counseling services, accommodations, and learning disability support services, and effective test-taking strategies.

3. Once our students graduate, we do not have any control over when they take the credentialing exam. What can we do?

- Keep in touch with the graduates and provide reminders/prompts/encouragement regarding testing or retesting.
- Offer tutoring before taking the credentialing exam or before a retest.
- Suggest studying with others and incorporating quizzing.
- Discuss if there is a barrier to re-testing or what is contributing to a delay to test or retest.
- Continue to offer encouragement.
- Be transparent about the data on success rates on when the graduate takes the exam and subsequent retests.

4. Is there a correlation in the success rate between when the student graduates and when they take the certifying exam?

Programs report better success rates the sooner the graduates take the certifying exam. A best practice is to take the exam within the first two weeks following program completion.

5. When retesting is necessary, is there an ideal time between attempts?

Programs report that increased time between exam attempts decreases the graduate's success. Discuss with the graduate what they are doing to prepare for the exam.

6. Is there a correlation between cohort size and graduate success on credentialing examinations?

Success rates on credentialing exams tend to be lower in programs with small cohorts. Explore how to capitalize on the student interaction during the program to develop cognitive competency.

7. Our cohorts are small. Can we get an exemption to the 70% credentialing outcomes threshold policy?

No, all programs are held to the same requirement.

8. Our program consistently falls below the 70% outcomes threshold that is required by CoAEMSP. Is that a problem?

Yes. Per CoAEMSP policy, if a program does not meet the 70% threshold for three (3) consecutive years, the following policy applies: "Accredited programs that fail to meet any single outcome threshold for each year of three (3) consecutive years may be recommended for Probationary Accreditation. LoR programs that fail to meet any single outcome threshold for each year of three (3) consecutive years may have their LoR revoked."