

## Updated NAPLEX Blueprint and New Passing Standard

The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) is pleased to announce that it has concluded its most recent analysis of the practice of pharmacy. The analysis consisted of an evaluation of current educational outcomes and competency statements and an expert review of the current North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (NAPLEX) blueprint content. An analysis such as this is customarily performed on a regular basis to ensure that the blueprint, which guides the content of the NAPLEX, is current with the knowledge and skills necessary to safely and effectively practice entry-level pharmacy.

The outcome of this process resulted in revisions to the current NAPLEX blueprint. Some of the more noteworthy changes include increasing the emphasis on communication skills, treating over-the-counter and prescription products equally, and adding a competency specifically addressing dietary supplements. The updated blueprint was validated through a survey of practicing pharmacists. Analysis of the survey resulted in changes to the percentage of examination questions allotted to each of the three major content areas of the blueprint. To review all of the changes in full, please refer to the updated NAPLEX Competency Statements, also posted on the Web site. To view the updated NAPLEX Competency Statements, please [click here](#).

The final step of this review process involved convening a panel of content experts from across the country to participate in a passing score study to determine the “minimally acceptable level” of performance on this licensure examination. The focus of the panel throughout the study was on the level of knowledge and performance related to pharmacy practice that is expected of a pharmacist in order to protect the health and welfare of the public. This type of study helps to ensure that the passing standard remains current and appropriate over time. As a result of the study, a new passing standard was recommended by the content experts to the Advisory Committee on Examinations who concurred with the recommendation. Subsequently this recommendation was approved by the NABP Executive Committee. It is important to emphasize that the minimum passing score remains scaled score of 75, just as it always has.

The updated blueprint and passing standard will go into effect simultaneously in **May 2005**. All NAPLEX examinations administered on or after this date will be based on the updated blueprint and passing standard, regardless of when the candidate registers or is approved by the board of pharmacy. Also, the content and layout of NABP’s Pre-NAPLEX™ will be reflective of the new blueprint beginning in early 2005.

For more information on the new passing standard, please review the following list of frequently asked questions.

## **NAPLEX Passing Standard Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **Does the new standard mean that the minimum passing score will now be higher than 75?**

No. The lowest acceptable level of ability will continue to translate into a scaled score of 75. The only difference is that the lowest acceptable level of ability will now be higher.

2. **Does this mean that more candidates will fail based on the new standard?**

Whether or not a state or school will notice an increase in failure rate will depend primarily on the following two criteria: first, the performance of candidates who have previously scored very close to the passing score; and second, the extents to which candidates in the future perform like they have in the past. Because of the nature of the NAPLEX passing standard, all candidates who perform at or above the minimally acceptable level receive a passing score. If instituting a higher passing standard causes candidates to prepare better than they had previously, their increased level of performance would likely offset any tendency toward an increased failure rate. On the other hand, if candidates continue to prepare as they have in the past, we would expect the higher standard to result in a higher failure rate.

3. **How will the scaled scores that are reported to us be affected?**

The scaled scores that will be reported will still range from 0 to 150, where a 75 designates the lowest acceptable level of performance.

4. **When will the new passing standard go into effect?**

The new passing standard will be implemented in conjunction with the revised NAPLEX blueprint in May of 2005. All candidates who attempt the NAPLEX after May 1, 2005 will receive an examination based on the revised blueprint and a score based on the new passing standard, regardless of when they registered or were approved by the board of pharmacy.

5. **When will the passing standard for the NAPLEX program be revisited?**

We anticipate repeating this process every four or five years, or whenever the blueprint on which the examination is based changes significantly.