

Scheduling and Test Day Policies and Procedures for the Special Purpose Examination – International (SPEXI)

PURPOSE

To explain the format of the medical board examination coordinated on behalf of the Medical and Dental Board under the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

METHODS OF APPLICATION

Applications are received through the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

ELIGIBILITY

Only those examinees/candidates meeting the criteria set by the Health Professions Council are eligible.

YOUR SCHEDULING PERMIT

You should verify the information on your Scheduling Permit before scheduling your appointment. Your Scheduling Permit includes the following:

- Your name,
- The examination for which you registered,
- Your Scheduling Number,
- Your **Candidate Identification Number (CIN)**.

You must either print and take your Scheduling Permit to the test center, or present it electronically (e.g., via Smartphone). You are strongly encouraged to print your Scheduling Permit at least several days in advance of your scheduled testing appointment to avoid any problems accessing or printing your permit on your scheduled test date.

Your Scheduling Number is required when you schedule a test appointment with Prometric. It differs from your Candidate Identification Number (CIN), which is your private key required to launch your exam on test day. Prometric does not have access to your CIN.

SCHEDULING YOUR TEST DATE

You must have your Scheduling Permit before you contact Prometric to schedule a testing appointment. Appointments are assigned on a "first-come, first-served" basis; therefore, you should contact Prometric to schedule as soon as possible after you print your Scheduling Permit.

You will be required to provide information found only on your Scheduling Permit. When you schedule your appointment, you will receive the following specific information:

- The confirmed test date and time;

- The address and telephone number of the Prometric Test Center where you will test; and
- Your Prometric Confirmation Number(s).

After you schedule your testing appointment, you can print a confirmation of your appointment from the Prometric website (<http://www.prometric.com>). It is highly recommended to confirm your testing appointment information one week before your test date.

TEST LENGTH AND FORMAT

The SPEXI is a one-day, computer-administered examination consisting of 200 items administered in 5 blocks of 60 minutes each (approximately 40 questions in each block).

During the defined time to complete the items in each block, you may answer the items in any order, review your responses, and change answers. After you exit the block, or when time expires, you can no longer review test items or change answers.

EXAMINATION DESIGN

The SPEXI examination is constructed from an integrated content outline, which organizes content according to general principles and individual organ systems. Test questions are classified in one of 18 major areas, depending on whether they focus on concepts and principles that are important across organ systems or within individual organ systems.

Table 1: SPEXI TEST CONTENT SPECIFICATIONS

System	Approximate Percentage
General Principles *	1.5%

Immune System Blood & Lymphoreticular System Behavioral Health Nervous System & Special Senses Skin & Subcutaneous Tissue Musculoskeletal System Cardiovascular System Respiratory System Gastrointestinal System Renal & Urinary System Pregnancy, Childbirth, & the Puerperium Female Reproductive System & Breast Male Reproductive System Endocrine System Multisystem Processes & Disorders	76.5%
Biostatistics & Epidemiology/Population Health & Interpretation of Medical Literature/Social Sciences	22%

**** The general principles category for the SPEXI examination includes test items concerning normal processes not limited to specific organ systems. These test items are typically related to normal development. Categories for individual organ systems include test items concerning those normal and abnormal processes that are system-specific.***

PHYSICIAN TASKS/COMPETENCIES

An additional organizing construct for SPEXI design is physician tasks and competencies. Items are constructed to focus on assessing one of the following competencies:

- Medical knowledge/scientific concepts: Applying foundational science concepts

- Patient care: Diagnosis
- Patient care: Management
- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Professionalism, including legal and ethical issues
- Systems-based practice, including patient safety
- Practice-based learning, including biostatistics and epidemiology

SPEXI PHYSICIAN TASKS/COMPETENCIES SPECIFICATIONS

Competency	Approximate Percentage
Medical Knowledge/Scientific Concepts	8%
Patient Care: Diagnosis History/Physical Exam Laboratory/Diagnostic Studies Diagnosis Prognosis/Outcome	35%
Patient Care: Management Health Maintenance/Disease Prevention Pharmacotherapy Clinical Interventions Mixed Management	35%
Communication and Professionalism	12%
Systems-based Practice/Patient Safety and Practice-based Learning	10%

PREPARATION FOR THE EXAMINATION

There are no test preparation courses affiliated with, or sanctioned by, the SPEXI program.

Test center staff is not authorized to provide instruction on use of the software, however, prior to beginning the test, a brief tutorial on the test day provides a review of the test software, including navigation tools and examination format. It does not provide an opportunity to practice.

ADMISSION TO THE TEST

When you arrive at the test center, you must present your Scheduling Permit and the required identification. Acceptable forms of identification include the following forms of unexpired identification:

- Passport,
- Driver's license with photograph,
- National identity card,
- Additional form of unexpired, government-issued identification.

Your identification must contain both your signature and photograph. If it contains your photograph but not your signature, you can use another form of unexpired identification that contains your signature, such as an employee identification card or a credit card, to supplement your photo-bearing, government-issued identification.

The first and last names on your identification **must exactly match** the names on your permit. The only acceptable difference would be the presence of a middle name, middle initial or suffix on one document and its absence on the other. Please contact the Health Professions Council of South Africa immediately if the name on your permit is misspelled or differs from your name as it appears on your identification. **Name changes or corrections cannot be made within 7 business days of your scheduled testing appointment.**

Note: You will not be admitted to the testing room without presenting either a printed or electronic copy of your permit and an unexpired, government-issued form of identification (such as a driver's license or passport) that includes **both** your photograph and signature.

TEST CENTERS AND TESTING CONDITIONS

Prometric provides computer-based testing services for academic assessment, professional licensure, and certification. The examinations are given at Prometric Test Centers in the United States and its territories. These centers provide the resources necessary for secure administration, including video and audio monitoring and recording, and use of digital cameras to record the identity of examinees.

You should arrive at the Prometric Test Center 30 minutes before your scheduled testing appointment on your testing day(s). If you arrive more than 30 minutes after your scheduled testing appointment, you **will not** be admitted. Upon arrival at the test center, you must present the required identification, sign a test center log, be photographed, and store your personal belongings in your assigned locker.

Please note the following:

- You will be asked to empty and turn your pockets inside out; you will be asked to repeat this process prior to every entry into the testing room after a break.
- You will be required to remove eyeglasses for visual inspection by the test center administrators. These inspections will take a few seconds and will be done at check-in and upon return from breaks.
- Jewelry, except for wedding and engagement rings, is prohibited
- Hair accessories are subject to inspection. You should not wear ornate clips, combs, barrettes, headbands, and other hair accessories. Any examinee wearing any of these items may be prohibited from wearing them in the testing room, and asked to store such items in their locker.

Test center staff will collect your Scheduling Permit. You will be instructed to write your name and Candidate Identification Number (CIN) on one of the laminated writing surfaces provided. Your Scheduling Permit will be retained at the Test Center Administrator's station. You may request access to the permit during the examination if it becomes necessary for you to rewrite the CIN on the laminated writing surface. Test center staff will escort you to your assigned testing station and provide brief instructions on use of the computer equipment. Laminated writing surfaces and markers issued are to be used for making notes and/or calculations during the testing session. They should only be used at your assigned testing station, and only after you have begun your examination by entering your CIN. You must enter your CIN to start the examination, which begins with a brief tutorial prior to the first test block. If you have filled the laminated writing surfaces and need additional space for making notes, you will need to notify test center staff and a replacement will be provided. Laminated writing surfaces must be returned to test center staff at the end of the testing session.

COMPLETING THE TEST

Your entire testing session is scheduled for a fixed amount of time. The computer keeps track of your overall time and the time allocated for each block of the test. **There is an optional 15 minutes of break time allotted for this examination.** If you complete the tutorial early, the remaining time will be available as authorized break time. Authorized breaks include any time taken between test blocks, whether you take a brief break at your seat or you leave the testing room.

While you are testing, the block and daytime clocks continue to run even if you leave the testing room, (e.g., for a personal emergency or restroom break). If you leave during a block, the test center staff will report that fact as an irregular incident. In addition, the "unauthorized break" screen, described in the examination tutorial, may appear on the monitor at your workstation during a testing block.

As explained in the tutorial, the unauthorized break screen will appear after a defined period of inactivity (no mouse click or key entry). Thirty seconds before the appearance of the unauthorized break screen, an "inactivity timeout" warning will appear. If you do not click as instructed on the warning screen, the unauthorized break screen will appear after 30 seconds. You will then have to enter your Candidate Identification Number (CIN) in order to continue with the examination.

Each time you leave the testing room, you are required to sign out and sign in when you return. You must present your identification each time you sign in.

When block time runs out, you will not be able to navigate to any new screens within that block. The computer will close the block. After you complete or run out of time for each block during the test, you must respond when the computer asks you to indicate whether you want to take a break or continue.

The test session ends when you have started and exited all sections or the total time for the test expires. You will receive a notice during checkout that you have appeared for the test. In the rare event that the End of Session Notice does not print, please contact HPCSA. You will sign out as you leave the test center, hand in the laminated writing surfaces.

If you experience a computer problem during the test, notify test center staff immediately. The testing software is designed to allow the test to restart at the point it was interrupted. In most cases, your test can be restarted at the point of interruption with no loss of testing time. However, it is possible that a technical problem may occur that does not permit you to complete your examination. In the rare event that this occurs, please send a written description of the incident to the HPCSA.

TESTING REGULATIONS AND RULES OF CONDUCT

You will maintain the confidentiality of the examination materials. You will not reproduce or attempt to reproduce examination materials through recording, memorization, or any other means. Also, you will not provide information relating to examination content to anyone, including those who may be taking or preparing others to take the examination. This includes postings regarding examination content and/or answers on the Internet.

Test center staff monitor all testing sessions. You must follow instructions of test center staff throughout the examination. Failure to do so may result in a determination of irregular behavior.

Test center staff are not authorized to answer questions from examinees regarding examination content, testing software, or scoring. Test center staff are also not authorized to answer inquiries with regard to registration or retesting.

PERSONAL ITEMS

Unauthorized possession of personal items while in the secure areas of the testing centers may lead to a finding of irregular behavior. **It is important that you read and understand the rules regarding personal possessions.** You may bring soft-foam cordless earplugs into the testing room. However, they must be out of the packaging and ready for inspection by test center staff during check-in. Earplugs must be left at the workstation during all breaks.

Unauthorized items include, but are not limited to:

- Mechanical or electronic devices, such as cellular telephones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), calculators, watches of any type, electronic paging devices, recording or filming devices, radios;
- Outerwear, such as coats, jackets, head wear, gloves;
- Book bags, backpacks, handbags, briefcases, wallets;
- Books, notes, written materials, or scratch paper;
- Food, candy, gum, or beverages.

If you bring personal items to the test center, you must store them in a designated locker outside the secure testing area. You should keep in mind that the storage facilities are small and that all stored mechanical or electronic devices must be turned off. Personal items and their contents may be subject to inspection. Any materials that reasonably appear to be reproductions of any examination materials will be confiscated. Making notes of any kind during an examination, except on the laminated writing surfaces provided by the test center for this purpose, is not permitted. Removal of those materials from the secure testing area is prohibited.

CANCELLED OR DELAYED EXAM ADMINISTRATION OR PROBLEMS AT THE TESTING CENTER

Every effort is made to administer an examination at the scheduled test time and location. On occasion, however, exam administrations may be delayed or cancelled in emergencies such as severe weather, a natural disaster that renders a Prometric Testing Center (PTC) inaccessible or unsafe, or extreme technical difficulties. If Prometric closes a testing center where you have already scheduled a testing appointment, it will reschedule the examination appointment at no additional charge.

In that event, Prometric will attempt to notify you in advance of your testing appointment to schedule a different time and/or center. Rescheduling an appointment for a different time or center may occur at the last minute due to limited availability of seats in a PTC.

You are strongly advised to reconfirm your appointment with Prometric and maintain flexibility in any travel arrangements you may make.

If you are unable to keep your testing appointment on the scheduled date or at the scheduled location, you may change your date or center by following the instructions on your Scheduling Permit for contacting Prometric. If you request to reschedule a previously scheduled test without the required five (5) business days' notice required, the applicable Reschedule Fee will be charged directly to the Examinee by Prometric. **The applicable Reschedule Fee, to be charged directly to the Examinee, by Prometric, is \$221.00**

To avoid a rescheduling fee, you must cancel or reschedule your appointment at least five business days before your scheduled test date. You will need to provide your Prometric Confirmation Number when you reschedule. Your rescheduled test date must fall within the testing window.

OWNERSHIP AND COPYRIGHT OF EXAMINATION MATERIALS

The materials presented on this examination are owned and copyrighted by the National Board of Medical Examiners® (NBME®) and the Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States, Inc. (FSMB). Any unauthorized transfer or reproduction of these materials or any part of them, by any means, including but not limited to, storage in a retrieval system, transmission, copying or printing, reconstruction through memorization, and/or distribution is strictly prohibited. The NBME and FSMB reserve the right to pursue their rights and remedies to the fullest extent permitted by law without further notice to you, including taking legal action.

EXHIBIT A

SAMPLE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Single-Item Questions

A single patient-centered vignette is associated with one question followed by four or more response options. The response options are lettered (i.e., A, B, C, D, E). A portion of the questions involves interpretation of graphic or pictorial materials. You are required to select the best answer to the question. Other options may be partially correct, but there is only ONE BEST answer. This is the traditional, most frequently used multiple-choice question format on the examination.

Example Question 1

1. A 30-year-old man comes to the emergency department because of an acute episode of renal colic. Medical history is remarkable for episodes of painful urination and passing of what he calls "gravel in my urine." Urinalysis demonstrates microscopic hematuria with some crystalluria and no casts. Supine x-ray of the abdomen shows no abnormalities. A 4-mm renal calculus is detected in the distal right ureter on ultrasonography. There is no evidence of dilation of the collecting system. The patient's pain is responsive to narcotic medication. In addition to administering intravenous fluids, which of the following is the most appropriate next step?

- A. Acidification of urine by drinking cranberry juice
- B. Cystoscopic removal of the calculus
- C. Cystoscopic ureteral lavage
- D. Shock wave lithotripsy

E. Straining of the urine

(Answer: E)

Multiple Item Sets

A single patient-centered vignette may be associated with two or three consecutive questions about the information presented. Each question within these sets is associated with the patient vignette and is independent of the other question(s) in the set. The items within this type of format are designed to be answered in any order. You are required to select the ONE BEST answer to each question.

Example Questions 2 and 3

A 52-year-old man returns to the office for reevaluation of an ulcer on his right great toe. The patient has a 15-year history of diabetes mellitus and takes glipizide and rosiglitazone. He first noticed the ulcer 2 months ago. One month ago, a 14-day course of oral amoxicillin-clavulanate therapy was prescribed. He has smoked one pack of cigarettes daily for the past 37 years. He is 178 cm (5 ft 10 in) tall and weighs 102 kg (225 lb); BMI is 32 kg/m². Today, vital signs are temperature 38.8°C (101.8°F), pulse 96/min, respirations 12/min, and blood pressure 130/85 mm Hg. Physical examination of the right great toe discloses a 1.5-cm nontender ulcer with a depth of 0.5 cm, a moist base, yellow exudate, and surrounding erythema to the level of the malleoli. Vibration sense and sensation to monofilament examination are absent. Pulses are diminished in both feet. Capillary refill time is 2 seconds in the right great toe. Urinalysis discloses 3+ protein.

2. Which of the following historical factors or physical examination findings is most strongly associated with development of this patient's foot ulcer?

- A. Diminished pedal pulses
- B. Neurologic findings
- C. The patient's weight
- D. Proteinuria
- E. Tobacco use

(Answer: B)

3. Which of the following is the most appropriate action at this time?

- A. Begin aggressive debridement in the office
- B. Begin intravenous antibiotic therapy
- C. Refer the patient for transmetatarsal amputation
- D. Schedule the patient for a third-degree skin graft
- E. Switch the amoxicillin-clavulanate to oral ciprofloxacin

(Answer: B)

Sequential Item Sets

A single patient-centered vignette may be associated with two or three consecutive questions about the information presented. Each question is associated with the initial patient vignette but is testing a different point. You are required to select the ONE BEST answer to each question. Questions are designed to be answered in sequential order. You must click "Proceed to Next Item" to view the next item in the set; once you click on this button, you will not be able to add or change an answer to the displayed (previous) item.

Example Questions 4 to 5

A 2-year-old girl is brought to the office by her mother for evaluation of fever. You have been the girl's physician since birth. While in the office, the girl stiffens and then has bilateral, symmetrical shaking of her upper and lower extremities; she becomes mildly cyanotic. The episode lasts for approximately 45 seconds, after which she becomes relaxed and appears to fall asleep. Vital signs at this time are temperature 40.0°C (104.0°F), pulse 120/min, and respirations 40/min. On physical examination she has a generally pink complexion and flushed cheeks. She is limp and somnolent and responds with a cry to noxious stimulus. Tympanic membranes are inflamed bilaterally, nose has a scant, clear discharge, and throat is mildly erythematous. Lungs are clear to auscultation except for transmitted upper airway sounds. Heart has rapid rate with a grade 1/6 systolic murmur at the left sternal border. Complete blood count, blood culture, lumbar puncture, and catheterized urine specimen are obtained and sent for stat analysis. Acetaminophen is administered by rectal suppository. Thirty minutes later the patient awakens and is smiling. She is afebrile. Additional history discloses that she was born at term, she had an uneventful neonatal course, she has normal growth and development, and vaccinations are up-to-date. She has never had an episode similar to this. Initial laboratory results are shown:

Blood	
WBC	10,400/mm ³
Neutrophils, segmented	25%
Neutrophils, bands	5%
Lymphocytes	65%
Monocytes	5%

Cerebrospinal fluid	0 RBC/mm ³
Urinalysis	Normal
Other laboratory studies are pending.	

Other laboratory studies are pending.

4. In addition to ampicillin for otitis media and acetaminophen, this child also should receive which of the following?

Oral ethosuximide

Oral phenobarbital

Oral phenytoin

Rectal diazepam

No additional medications

(Answer: E)

5. Two weeks later the patient is brought to the office for a follow-up visit. Her mother says that she is doing well and she has had no recurrence of her symptoms. Examination of the ears shows resolution of the otitis media. Which of the following is the most important diagnostic step at this time?

Audiology testing

Cognitive testing

CT scan of the head

EEG

No additional testing

(Answer: E)

Pharmaceutical Advertisement (Drug Ad) Format

The drug ad item format includes a rich stimulus presented in a manner commonly encountered by a physician, e.g., as a printed advertisement in a medical journal. Examinees must interpret the presented material in order to answer questions on various topics, including:

Decisions about care of an individual patient

Biostatistics/epidemiology

Pharmacology/therapeutics

Development and approval of drugs and dietary supplements

Medical ethics

Abstract Format

The abstract item format includes a summary of an experiment or clinical investigation presented in a manner commonly encountered by a physician, e.g., as an abstract that accompanies a research report in a medical journal. Examinees must interpret the abstract in order to answer questions on various topics, including:

Decisions about care of an individual patient

Biostatistics/epidemiology

Pharmacology/therapeutics

Use of diagnostic studies