

THE ORAL EXAMINATION IN FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

AMERICAN BOARD OF FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY, INC. (ABFP)

Following is a general outline of procedures and other considerations regarding the Oral Examination in Forensic Psychology. For additional information and more specific details, please contact the ABFP National Chair of Examinations.

Candidates still proceeding under the “old” (typically, pre-2006) Oral Examination format are advised to contact the ABFP National Chair of Examinations as soon as possible, to determine which of these procedures and considerations may be applicable to their particular situations.

A. Initiating the Oral Examination Process

- (1) The Executive Director notifies the National Chair of Examinations (NCE) that the Practice Samples comport with both ABFP and ABPP submission requirements.
- (2) The NCE contacts the Candidate and forwards electronic copies (with instructions) of the:
 - (a) *Request for Psychological Association Ethical Clearance* form;
 - (b) *Request for State/Provincial Board Ethical Clearance* form; and
 - (c) *Ethical Certification* form.
- (3) The NCE requests that the Candidate supply his or her fully up-to-date *curriculum vitae* with current contact information.
- (4) The NCE also provides the Candidate with a copy of (or a link to) the most recent version of the *Suggested Reading List for Written and Oral Examinations*.

B. Scheduling the Oral Examination

- (1) Once the NCE has received properly endorsed copies of all the forms described in A.2 *supra*, the Candidate is notified of this fact and is:
 - (a) informed when and where the next round of Oral Examinations—for which adequate time remains to select and prepare an Oral Examination Committee—is scheduled to occur;
 - (b) provided with a list of current ABFP members and ABFP Faculty members; and

- (c) asked to identify any of these persons whose participation on the Oral Examination Committee might constitute a conflict of interest.
- (2) The NCE impanels a three-member Oral Examination Committee (consisting of a Chair and two Co-Examiners), and informs the Candidate of its composition, as well as the specific date and time on which the Oral Examination is to be conducted.
- (3) The Candidate is then requested to mail one (1) printed copy of each Practice Sample (comb-bound or spiral-bound) by a date certain to each member of the Oral Examination Committee, and is provided mailing addresses for this purpose.

C. Conducting the Oral Examination

- (1) The Oral Examination is designed to determine the Candidate's quality of practice and forensic knowledge in areas exemplified by the Practice Samples, as well as to determine the Candidate's understanding and application of ethical standards—in particular, the most recent versions of the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* and the *Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychologists*.
- (2) The Oral Examination Committee seeks to determine that Candidates possess a high level of professional competence and maturity, with the ability to articulate an explicit and coherent rationale for their work in forensic psychology. Successful Candidates should be those who act with constant alertness to the ethical issues involved in forensic practice. One implication of the Oral Examination Committee's recommendation to award certification is that its members would also feel comfortable in recommending successful Candidates to those soliciting the expertise in question.
- (3) The Oral Examination Committee is composed, when possible, of at least one person who reviewed the Candidate's Practice Samples, and typically will also include at least one ABFP member. Other Practice Sample reviewers as well as ABPP and ABFP members may observe some or all of the Oral Examination, as long as they have not been identified by the Candidate as subject to a conflict of interest.
- (4) The Oral Examination, which is recorded on audio tape, lasts approximately 2½ to 3 hours, with the first half generally devoted to questions concerning one Practice Sample, and the second half generally devoted to questions concerning the other Practice Sample.
- (5) Except for ethical standards as described in C.6 *infra*, a Candidate is considered responsible only for practice and knowledge reasonably related to areas exemplified by the two Practice Samples. For example, a Candidate submitting Practice Samples concerning "competency to stand trial" and "criminal responsibility" would not expect to be examined on "child custody."

- (6) An exception to this primarily Practice Sample-focused approach concerns the Candidate's understanding and application of ethical standards and guidelines. During both halves of the Oral Examination, it is permissible for inquiries based in the Practice Samples to evolve into discussion of other aspects of professional psychological ethics. The intent here is not, of course, to play "gotcha" with Candidates beyond their stated areas of expertise, but rather to ensure that exploration of this core aspect of professionalism is not hampered by an artificially narrow view of the roles and obligations of the forensic psychologist.
- (7) At the end of the Oral Examination, the Candidate is thanked for participating, and is reminded not to contact any member of the Oral Examination Committee prior to receiving formal notification from ABPP or ABFP of the outcome of the Oral Examination.

D. Reporting the Results of the Oral Examination

- (1) Immediately following the departure of the Candidate, the Oral Examination Committee deliberates and arrives at a recommendation concerning the outcome of the Oral Examination, which is then communicated to ABFP.
- (2) Based upon its review of the Oral Examination Committee's recommendation, ABFP determines whether the Candidate has passed or failed the Oral Examination. This decision is typically communicated to the Candidate by ABPP within 4 to 6 weeks of the Oral Examination.
- (3) Any inquiries from the Candidate, either before or after the communication of ABFP's decision, should be directed only to the President.
- (4) Candidates who pass the Oral Examination become Diplomates of ABFP, Diplomates of the American Board of Professional Psychology, and Fellows of the American Academy of Forensic Psychology.
- (5) Candidates who fail the Oral Examination for the first time may resume the certification process by submitting two new Practice Samples within one year of the communication of ABFP's decision, and do not need to retake the Written Examination before doing so; however, see (6) infra.
- (6) Candidates who fail to obtain the ABFP diploma within four years of passing the Written Examination must retake and pass the Written Examination before submitting new Practice Samples.
- (7) Candidates wishing to appeal a decision of ABFP must contact the President within 30 days of the communication of that decision.