



PharmD Candidates: How Ethical Standards Play a Role in the Integrity of the NAPLEX

National Association of Boards of Pharmacy®

Culture of Integrity at the University Level

- Student Code of Conduct
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Academic Honesty Policy
- Plagiarism Policy
- Integrity Oath
- Code of Ethics
- Honor Code



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(School's/College's Policy)

- (Reserved for text or image of the policy for the school/college where presentation is being given)

NABP Examination Integrity

- Exams are utilized to identify candidates who demonstrate the acceptable level of competency to qualify for pharmacist licensure in the United States.
 - North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination[®] (NAPLEX[®])
 - Multistate Pharmacy Jurisprudence Examination[®] (MPJE[®])
 - Other NABP examinations
- It is necessary to maintain a standardized and secure testing environment.



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NABP Examination Integrity

- Before beginning the exam, candidate must accept the Examinee Conduct and Non-disclosure Agreements.
 - If select “Next,” candidate agrees to abide by the terms of the Agreements.
 - Authorizes signature and acceptance of terms
 - If select “End Exam,” candidate does not agree to the terms.
 - Exam terminated and all fees forfeited



Examination Misconduct

Misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Making available any portion or the entirety of exam content.
- Selling, offering, disclosing, transmitting, copying, reproducing exam content without specific NABP authorization in any form.
- Requesting, purchasing, receiving, acquiring, or utilizing exam content without specific NABP authorization.
- Attempting to aid an individual or receive aid to complete the examination.
- Copying or memorizing examination questions, answers, or any other exam content and/or removing this information.



Examination Misconduct

- Misconduct in connection with the NAPLEX, MPJE, or exam content is prohibited at all times, including:
 - Prior to registering, scheduling, or taking the examination; during an examination appointment; and after taking the examination.
- Misconduct can involve:
 - Individuals and candidates.
 - Groups of individuals or candidates such as classmates, coworkers, friends, family, study groups, organizations, or entities.



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NABP Examination Security

- Exams are property of NABP
- Confidential
- Protected by trade secret law, copyright law, and other applicable state and federal laws and regulations
- Numerous security measures are enforced during test administration
- Candidates are observed at all times while taking the examination



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NABP Examination Security

- NABP may cancel or invalidate an examination score or withhold the reporting of an examination score for any reason including, without limitation:
 - Noncompliance with policies by one or more candidates,
 - Accessing examination content prior to taking the exam, and/or
 - Stealing exam content.



NAPLEX and MPJE Format

- Exam Design
 - Fixed-form examination in compliance with the content specifications, blueprint, and other statistical and psychometric targets.
 - All test questions must be answered in the order in which they are presented.
- Scoring
 - Calculated by first determining the candidate's ability level and then whether the score has met the minimum passing standard established.



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Case Background

- In 2015, NABP learned of an alleged occurrence involving the sale of NAPLEX test items.
- NABP confirmed that an account on eBay was promoting the sale of NAPLEX items compiled by an examinee after the examinee's test administrations in 2014 and 2015.



Case Background

- Once NABP confirmed that content from the NAPLEX was being sold online, NABP **immediately:**
 - Caused eBay to take down the sales offers for NAPLEX material, and
 - Removed several affected test questions from the NAPLEX item bank.



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Investigation

- Needed to identify:
 - Seller
 - The original individual involved with the compilation and selling of NAPLEX test material
 - Disclosers
 - Individuals who allegedly disclosed test items to the Seller that the Seller then included in the compilation
 - Purchasers
 - Individuals who bought the eBay materials



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Investigation

- NABP data was critical to the identification of the Seller and Disclosers.
- NABP identified alleged individuals by mapping content on each test taker's examination with the materials the Seller offered for sale on eBay.



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Investigation

- With the support of the board of pharmacy in the state that the Seller and alleged Disclosers designated for licensure, NABP:
 - Interviewed the Seller, and
 - Contacted identified individuals allegedly involved with the purchase or sale of NAPLEX items on eBay.

Outcomes and Consequences

- Culminated in the identification of over 20 additional individuals involved in purchasing, and two individuals selling, the NAPLEX items.
- Among the group of buyers were:
 - Recent US pharmacy program graduates,
 - US pharmacy program students,
 - Pharmacy interns,
 - Pharmacy technicians, and
 - Registered pharmacists.



Outcomes and Consequences

- For individuals who violated the NAPLEX non-disclosure or candidate conduct agreements, NABP and the respective individuals entered into agreements that required:
 - Payment of monetary damages,
 - A prohibition on scheduling the NAPLEX for a defined period of time,
 - Remitting to NABP the eBay sales revenues (which were then donated to charity),
 - Notification of the misconduct to the state boards of pharmacy, and/or
 - Consequences for any future similar activity.



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Outcomes and Consequences

- Many boards of pharmacy initiated their own investigations or disciplinary actions against these individuals.
- For others who were not bound by NAPLEX non-disclosure obligations, the identified individuals agreed:
 - Not to disclose the purchased NAPLEX content,
 - To certify its destruction, and
 - To future consequences if they engaged in any similar activity.



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Conclusions

- Exam security and the integrity of the NAPLEX are of paramount importance to NABP.
 - The NAPLEX is used by all 50 states and NABP member jurisdictions to identify candidates who demonstrate the acceptable level of competency in order to qualify for pharmacist licensure.
- NABP assists its member boards in protecting the public by developing examination programs such as the NAPLEX and MPJE to support sound licensing decisions by the boards.



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Conclusions

- Candidates who offer to sell, purchase, disclose, or otherwise make available NABP examination content may be subject to NABP sanctions, including:
 - canceled testing appointments,
 - a hold on taking an NABP examination,
 - significant monetary penalties,
 - disgorgement of profits, and
 - notification to the state boards of pharmacy.



Conclusions

- NABP may also:
 - Cancel scores (requiring retesting).
 - Litigate cases, particularly where NABP damages are significant.
- Such candidates may be subject to civil or criminal proceedings that could result in:
 - monetary loss, fines, or other punishment.
 - reputational damage that may impact their employment and ability to advance in the profession.



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Conclusions

- Candidates engaging in examination misconduct may also face disciplinary action by the boards of pharmacy, including:
 - additional lengthy holds being placed on taking the licensure examination,
 - denial of the candidate's pharmacist licensure application, or
 - licensure probation.



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Conclusions

- Important that students adhere to professional codes of ethics and conduct in pharmacy.
- Students eventually become candidates for licensure and need to adhere to ethical standards as part of the testing process.



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Questions?



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