

## Specialty Certification Standards During COVID-19 Pandemic Q&A

*Webinar held on April 27, 2020*

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Read the Specialty and Subspecialty Certification Standards COVID-19 Policy [here](#).

Read FAQs about the 2020 QE [here](#).

***GW – Dr. George Wendel***

***WL – Dr. Wilma Larsen***

***CA – Cariel Apodaca***

**GW:** Good afternoon, or good morning, I'm sorry. My name is Dr. George Wendel. I'm the Executive Director of ABOG and I direct the standards for certification in OB GYN and our five subspecialties.

I'm joined today by Dr. Wilma Larsen, our Associate Executive Director for Examinations and Cariel Apodaca, manager of our subspecialty divisions and external stakeholder relations.

We're happy to talk to you today to help clarify some issues regarding OB GYN certification standards and exams that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic emergency response.

First and foremost, thank you for the incredible work that you're doing caring for your patients, your colleagues, your families, your residents, and the communities we serve. You're on the front lines during a crucial time for our country and you're examples of inspiration for us.

There are important implications for the changes in practice, in education, research, and training that your residents and you are currently facing and will be facing over the next few months. We want to assure you that your participation in your local COVID-19 response should be your primary priority and the primary priority of your residents.

ABOG will work with the residents and those affected by the local crises to help your residents complete their training on time as much as possible. Be assured that they're competent to practice independently in the specialty of OB GYN and be eligible to seek voluntary certification.

As you know, we've released temporary accommodations to the standards for OB GYN certification. We've released a set of FAQs regarding those standards on our certification requirements and we hope to spend this time to allow you to ask us questions and address concerns about these policies.

Importantly, the ACGME has released statements and guidance regarding residency program requirements and program accreditation these are not really the subject of our discussion today, and we can't comment too much on their policies other than refer you to that organization and those documents posted on their website.

We can assure you that we're in constant communication with the executive director and the chair of the RRC OB GYN and we work collaboratively on policies and procedures that would affect training and your programs. Please feel free to reach out to the RRC or to us for any questions that aren't addressed today or that have specific implications for individual trainees.

We'll begin the session now by opening up by answering some questions that have been submitted in preparation for the meeting and then we'll open up the session for additional questions. In advance, thank you for your participation during this busy time. We know you have other competing goods for your time this morning and we hope that this will be an efficient time for you to communicate with us.

Lastly, thank you to Sandra Hodgson and Rachel Crawford in our communications department for the setup today. And with that, I'll turn things over to Cariel Apodaca, who will address some questions. Please feel free to send your questions in through the Q&A icon at the bottom of the screen on the Zoom chat area. We have muted most of your microphones, but if you would prefer to ask your question, please feel free to raise your hand and we will recognize you, unmute you, and then allow you to ask your question verbally if that's more convenient.

***Are there plans to postpone the specialty certifying oral board examination?***

**GW:** We meet almost on a semi daily basis talking about the changes that may need to be made going forward.

**WL:** Hopefully, most of you are aware that we've released a number of accommodations for the Certifying Exam to allow as many people who would like to take it in the 2020 examination cycle to do so. At this time, we're not planning to reschedule the examination. As most of you I'm sure are aware, we have four separate exam weeks: one in November, one in December, and two in January. We're hopeful that with having four different weeks, we'll be able to find a place for everyone to take the examination.

We know that there are a lot of predictions as far as COVID, and we know that the future is very uncertain and it certainly could affect us in the fall, just as it's affected us here in the spring. But, for now, we are keeping the exam scheduled as previously scheduled: November, December, and then two exams in January.

**GW:** This is an important topic, and one that which we are spending considerable time doing scenario planning. Many of you work at institutions that will have local restrictions on travel. Some of the candidates may be in situations where they may also have restrictions on travel, and I think the best thing we can say is this is a fluid situation that we will continuously follow and monitor as the months roll out and we see whether this is an episodic pandemic that abates quickly or whether there is seasonality to it and there are issues that occur again in the fall.

At this point, the exams are scheduled, but we do appreciate the fact that not only may it be difficult to come and take the exam, but it may be also difficult to come and give the exam during the times that people usually come and give the exam, so we'll stay tuned on that and we promise we'll continue to keep you up-to-date as this evolves.

I hope that answered the question. It's a good question and one that we're continually looking at as Wilma said.

***Will the Qualifying Exam be delayed? What accommodations will be made if not so that they're given in a safe manner given social distancing?***

**WL:** We can't give you a specific answer about the Qualifying Exam because we don't have complete control over the situation, not only because of COVID, but also because we have a partner that whom we have to use their testing centers to give the exam. What I can tell you is that currently, the Qualifying Exam is going to go on as scheduled in June.

Pearson VUE is reopening its testing centers as of 1 May, but not all of their centers. There are centers that are in hot spots, such as New York City, Detroit, places like that that likely will not be opening immediately. They are opening all of their centers and applying social distancing as the third question asks, so none of the center's will be opening at full capacity. All of them will be at a reduced, or essentially half capacity, because of social distancing.

This obviously affects our candidates that are scheduled to take the exam at the end of June, both graduating residents as well as graduating fellows, and has been extremely concerning to us.

We've met, we've gone through every option and every possibility. Our goal is to maximize the number of candidates that can take the exam in the 2020 cycle that want to, and so what I can tell you is that we are planning to have an alternate exam opportunity in addition to the June exam, but we don't know any more than that at this point.

We're very hopeful that we'll be able to put out some definitive guidance on this and some definitive information within the next week or two. Please realize that every time we put out information, it is subject to change depending on what happens with COVID, but we hope we will be able to get information to you very soon that will tell you exactly what the situation is going to be for the Qualifying Exam.

Now, there may be people that either because of COVID situations, because of discomfort in going into a testing center, for lots of reasons choose not to take the exam this year, if that's the case, their fees will be automatically either applied to the 2021 Qualifying Exam or refunded, whichever they prefer. They just have to let us know at [exams@abog.org](mailto:exams@abog.org) and their eligibility for certification will automatically be extended for an additional year.

We're not going to ask anybody that's uncomfortable or simply can't because of life circumstances, personal circumstances, take the exam. We want to do everything we can for those folks, as well to try to make this as, I don't want to say pain-free because it's obviously not, the COVID situation is always a very difficult situation, so that is what we currently have planned and hopefully, as I said, we'll be able to get you some definitive information out in the next week or so.

**GW:** I appreciate that, Wilma. I think one of the questions also was about how safe will it be to take the exam at the testing centers, and I think that's an issue that we have discussed in great detail with Pearson VUE, the testing center partner that we use for the exams.

They will be running their testing centers using social distancing, and will only be an operating at 50% capacity as they begin to roll open again in a staged fashion, and they plan to only be open using social distancing for the rest of this calendar year.

What that means for us is that only 50% of the people scheduled to take the test between now and the end of June will be able to take those tests. We are not completely certain what that means for our folks that want to take the exam at the end of June, but we're learning that more this week.

It may be that not everybody who is scheduled to take the exam will be able to take the exam because their centers may not be open. At best, those centers will be open at 50% capacity.

Even if we do find an alternate date later in a year, those centers will be only open at 50% capacity, so we are doing everything we can to make sure that if someone walks into that center to take a test, everything that will be done possible will be done both with social

distancing and with local infection control measures to make sure that taking the test it is safe for the candidates.

***GW: There's another related question about the possibility of virtual exams and that's a tougher question to answer for high stakes exams like this.***

**WL:** So actually the question was actually clarified that not virtual, but remote, so allowing candidates to take it locally with a proctor in the room that potentially the Program Director, I think is what the question is actually asking there.

From a virtual standpoint, in case anyone really is thinking about that, we really have explored that to great detail, and right now, that's just not an option for a high-stakes exam, and so that is not going to be an option for us for 2020.

In the future, those may improve to the point where doing remote proctoring and virtual exams for the Qualifying could be a possibility, but that's not going to be a possibility this year.

We have discussed the question that Dr. Pompeo asked of about using educational facilities, and that's something that we are talking about and considering with Pearson VUE right now. That doesn't appear to be a possibility for this year's exam, but we certainly have discussed it in fact just last week, but I think the most likely option is that we're going to offer more than one date.

Hopefully, candidates will be allowed to pick which date they would like to schedule for once that date has been announced, and so if candidates want to take it immediately in June, they can keep their date there, and the candidates that would prefer to take it later would be able to reschedule.

There is a very associated question there about how candidates would be notified if they'll be able to take it in June or if they have to plan for an alternative. George, did you want me to discuss that or would you like to address that?

**GW:** I'm not sure we have an answer for that yet and that's one of the challenges of being a certification organization is that your exams are delivered by another business and they have policies that are out of the control of the organization that puts on the test and so that organization or that company is scrambling right now because the spring is their big assessment season and there are assessments that they do involving tens and twenties and forty thousands of customers and they are spending the bulk of their time making sure that they handle those issues first before they roll to the smaller assessments, like ours, which is about 2,000 exams that would be administered at the end of June.

We asked the same question; how will people be selected if their exam is going to be cancelled and rescheduled, and the answer is still being developed by Pearson VUE. We hope to have more information to give you all and give the candidates within the next week about this, and so we don't even know at this point how many people it may affect because we don't know what testing centers will be open at this point at the end of June because those decisions about openings will be following the local restrictions that are going to be changing on a weekly basis over the next couple weeks.

I've tried to be as honest and transparent as we can, but at this point, we don't know how things are going to roll out for the Qualifying Exams, and as soon as we hear more, we will get that information to you. We are like every organization looking at the future of remote site proctoring for qualifying exams.

Unfortunately, the security of that is really an issue right now, and it's probably not something that can be used and defended for a high-stakes exam like ours, so I think at this point, I think that's probably the most we can say about the Qualifying Exam. Please stay tuned, we're working all alternatives. The alternatives are going to be set up with the interest of the candidates in mind, and we're going to do the best we can to offer them at least alternatives to the end of June for this year's examination.

***CA: Going back to the previous question, Dr. Pompeo clarified she was asking about remote proctoring for the certifying oral examination.***

**GW:** Virtual remote site proctoring for oral exams is a really unique concept and one is a little bit ahead of its time and ahead of the technology right now. Several boards have looked into this, and it really is a challenge security wise and exam administration wise, and although some people have enjoyed this process, an equal number have said they would never want to do it again because of the issues about privacy and security that have to be demonstrated within the confines of where the process takes place.

The biggest issue is, you might as well assume that everybody's recording the examination and will be passing on the information to others. That's just the reality of remote site proctoring of oral examinations, and at this point, the standards that organizations have to meet that offer high-stake assessments are such that that's not an acceptable methodology at this point, and it's been done in very small boards with about 30 and 40 exams, but no one has done that with a larger number of exams, so this may be part of the technology of the future, but right now, it's not something that we're able to offer, except in exceptions.

It may be something that we look at in the future, in a sort of nested study kind of concept, but if everybody can't be guaranteed the exact same experience during the process, then the process would be faulted for performance and then the decisions could be challenged, and until the technology is such that boards can be confident that every person gets the same experience when they do it virtually, it's still something that's probably a few years away.

I know again it's another vague answer to a really important question, but as with all these things, we're rethinking everything we do and all of our standards, and this will be part of future discussions at CREOG meetings and things like that. Thanks for bringing it up and thanks for pushing us in this direction.

***CA: There's a couple more clarification questions regarding the Qualifying Exam and going back to the selection of how many will be able to move forward or not. One question is, "Will consideration be given to candidates that are entering fellowship as they will have more difficulty getting to an exam?"***



**GW:** I don't think we have any plans for that right now, we're just trying to get a date first. I know this sounds crazy and evasive, but we are a really small customer in a very large industry and the big customers are getting the biggest amount of help and attention and the smaller customers are going to be finding out what is available later.

I think what we can say is it will not be a June or hopefully an early summer date. Our hope is that there is some degree of time separation between June and whatever date will be the alternative so that it really makes a difference, but again, this is pretty much out of our control right now, and we're doing the best we can with a partner who's communicating with us on an almost daily basis now about how things are changing.

***With this level of uncertainty is it fair to say that graduates can go ahead and opt to delay until the next year if they want to, rather than wait until they get cancelled by the test center?***

**GW:** I would say that it's a good question, and thanks for asking it. One of the things we've tried to urge people is not to overthink this and over-plan this, and if there's an opportunity for you to take the exam in June based on your location, I would strongly urge your graduates to take the examination.

In a sense, there is no penalty to take it. If you pass, remember you can begin your certification process, and the pass rate on these exams is in the mid 90s and low 90s, and I would urge caution in thinking that postponing the exam till the alternate date or to next year will offer you more time to prepare for the examination.

That has not been the history of how things have rolled out for people who have postponed the exam. They actually find that there's less time and less control of their time to prepare for the examination with the pressures to resume practices and start practices.

I think people are going to be challenged to find time to get extra time to prepare for the exam, so our hope is that there will be much more capacity for June then then then we've been reported by the organization right now, Pearson VUE, and that's our hope, but I would say at

this point, don't try to get ahead of what's coming from Pearson and wait for them before you make any choices.

They'll be capacity next year. I would say for certain in June. We just don't know what the capacity is going to be for the alternate date, and that's why we have to wait to get that information before we can tell you any more.

**WL:** One thing Pearson VUE has told us is that they're already treating anyone who's considered essential, such as physicians, as priority, so that is true. So, if you are something that's not essential that you need to schedule an exam, you're not even given an opportunity.

However, they are going to treat people very fairly and so the rescheduling will be in an algorithm that will be fair to all candidates, but means that it will be fair to all candidates and no one will have a distinct advantage.

I would agree with Dr. Wendel completely that I would urge your residents to wait to see how things play out before they cancel their exam and decide they're just going to take it in 2021.

First of all, we don't know when the second date will be, and that may be an opportunity where people say, I'm just going to reschedule into that second date.

Also, as Dr. Wendel mentioned, the pass rate is very high and even candidates that don't feel like they're ready to take the exam have a good first-time taker pass rate and will likely do much better than they think they will. I would urge your residents to wait to see how things play out and not just withdraw from the exam at this point.

***What if they get cancelled and want to take the exam in June, but can't take it either because the algorithm has canceled their exam or that the testing center in their city has not reopened?***

**GW:** We've been addressing that question with Pearson VUE and don't have a great answer at this point because we haven't been told how the algorithm is going to work and what the likelihood of our candidates are to be cancelled for an examination at the end of June.

We were assured, as Wilma said, that our candidates are considered essential workers and essential exams, and to that extent, we will be given some degree of priority to the testing centers. What that means, we don't know at this point.

**WL:** As you probably are all aware, what we've always done in the past for security reasons is that all of our, because this is an event-based task, meaning it's given on one day, all of the test takers have to schedule at 8:00 a.m. in their time zone. When they call to schedule the test, they can only schedule at 8:00 a.m., and if there's a time later in the day that's more convenient for them or if their center doesn't even have an 8:00 a.m. start or has a later time, they're not allowed to use that, and that's a security issue.

For this year, we've taken that away, and that means that candidates who let's say we're scheduled for 8:00 a.m. and do happen to be canceled based on the algorithm, if there was a start time at that same center or a nearby center later in the day, they would be allowed to schedule into a later start time.

That open start, if you will, will also be present for whatever the alternate date is that hopefully we'll be able to secure through Pearson VUE, so that gives the candidates more opportunities to schedule if they want to.

**GW:** Our hope is that that will avoid some of the issue of people's exams getting canceled, and perhaps they will be moved to a different time during the same day, but we don't know to what extent that's possible. Again, we're having continuous discussions with those organization, almost on a weekly basis to try to work on that issue.

***Are the FLS requirements for 2021 graduates going to be different since it is difficult for the residents to leave institutions and many FLS sites are currently closed?***

**GW:** As we begin to move from the 2020 grads to the 2021 grads and beyond, this is an issue that has come up we have regular phone calls with the FLS and SAGES management group. They are in the same predicament that all of us are in: working from home, the simulation centers are closed for practice, these simulation centers are closed for testing, and at this point, on the accommodation we've made is that we will relax the deadlines of requiring that you complete that standard before you can apply for the examinations and so you'll have to meet the FLS requirement by the time you take the exam, but they will this begin process of applying before that happens.

I hope that that will address things. This again is a fluid situation. The centers would love to open, but they can't do so without social distancing and infection control processes that are in place to make it safe to do so.

We'll be having an announcement coming out about that to this effect very soon.

**WL:** Please stay tuned for that announcement and should be coming out very soon as Dr. Wendel said.

**GW:** If there are other issues about FLS, please feel free to contact us. As time goes on, we can address those on an individual basis.

***Is there any discussion around multiple scattered start times during that date?***

**WL:** I apologize if I didn't make that clear when I was talking about the Qualifying Exam earlier, but yes, we are allowing candidates to have any start time that's available on the date that the exam is being offered. If a candidate were to be cancelled from the 8:00 a.m. start time, but there was a start time at 10:00 a.m. that was available and in that center, they would be

allowed to rebook into that start time, if they were the person that was up for it based on Pearson VUE's algorithm.

We have opened all start times to our candidates for both the June exam date and then we're planning to do that also for whatever the alternative exam date that we are hopefully able to secure is.

**GW:** I think if the implication of that question is are there issues about the security of the examination and content, exposure, and psychometrics? The answer to that is complicated yes.

There are, and those are issues that we as an organization have to deal with. We have administration on separate times, separate dates and we're going to hope to rely on the professionalism of the candidates to not expose the content to their colleagues who may have a later start time during the day.

As far as options, and this is clearly a concern on any high-stakes examination, but one that we feel that we can deal with because it's the best interest of the candidates to take the examinations when they've already planned on doing so. We will make adjustments for that internally, appropriately in our analyses.

***CA: Do you want to speak to whether we are encouraging people to change their times right now or encouraging them to wait?***

**WL:** We are not encouraging people to change their times at this point because we don't know what our second date is going to be, so we don't know what will work the best for the candidates. If there was someone who felt like, boy I really do need needed to change my start time, that was never going to work out well for me, they could try, but because all the test centers only have 50% availability, the chances that they would be able to do that right off the bat would be slim.

I would say one of the things that we're hoping for is we'll come up with a second date. It'll be very attractive to some of the candidates, and so that will allow people to take the exam when they want to be, either in June or at the alternative date. That's our hope.

***GW: There's another question about the set of exam questions on the different exams.***

I think it's important first, to start with, we have several forms right now that are administered on the same day, and so there are several forms of the exams that are administered even though the exam is administered on one day at this point, and so if people are going to start to think about should I delay it to find out what's on the exam, the answer is there are already several forms and there they are equivalent, they perform similar, and it really doesn't make any difference which of the dates you'll take the exam.

Results will be pooled and means they have will be analyzed at the end of the final administration date, and so no one will have any benefit by taking an exam earlier as best we can.

That was one of the requirements we had to have before we could move forward with an alternate date is to have multiple forms for the examination. It's a good question, and one that we want to make sure people don't think that there's some benefit one day or the other. As we can tell, the experiences should be equal.

***There is a resident that I would normally retain for remediation. Given the current procedural restrictions amidst the pandemic, I am concerned that they would not have enough cases for adequate remediation in the next several months. What should I do?***

**GW:** It's a really good question, and that's one that we've heard from both residents as well as Program Directors. This is almost more of an ACGME issue than it is an ABOG issue, and there is guidance from them on making decisions on whether a resident has finished their training and

is able to practice independently and without supervision. I think I would refer you to their documents for that.

We do have concern that that the current seniors pretty much have lost 1/3 to 1/4 of their chief year, and that may have implications for some, as far as their acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities during their residency training, but I think one thing to remind people is that your knowledge develop and your skill acquisition and your judgment continue to develop in your first years of practice. That's actually why our certification process isn't complete until you've had a full year of independent practice.

I would say that the best thing to do is if somebody does have concerns about their knowledge or abilities when they finish to give them instruction to work with their new practice and their new partners to help remedy those areas and improve those areas. If there are clear deficiencies that are so broad that it would mean somebody's not ready to practice independently without supervision, I think that's a different issue. But, if somebody is just not feeling as confident as they normally would, I would hope that those kinds of things could be handled during the first years of practice and attention could be given to helping them continue to learn and develop their knowledge and skills and abilities in the first years of practice.

**WL:** I totally agree, George. I think you know, I certainly learned a tremendous amount my first year out of residency and I think that will apply to these graduates as well. Hopefully that will help everyone feel more confident as they go into their new practice environments.

**CA:** *We have received several questions regarding the release of scores from the Qualifying Examination and whether those will wait till the alternate date.*

**GW:** There's quite a bit of analyses that goes on with the results of the exam, and we've been talking about that.

**WL:** That's an excellent question, and the answer is yes, we will not be releasing the results from the June exam until after the second administration is given, whenever that is.

As Dr. Wendel said, there is a tremendous amount of analysis that goes on the questions are analyzed and then of course, we're going, as he mentioned earlier, the results will be pooled and analyzed to set the cut score and so there there's a lot of work that has to be done. We won't be able to release the results from the June exam until after all that work is done on all of the test takers, and so that that will delay the release of results for the first exam until after the second exam.

**GW:** I hope that clarifies that. There were several questions about that, and it's an important issue and one that we had to internally discussed with our psychometricians about how to analyze exams that were given on different dates, and that's the best way and the most fair way to do so for all involved.

***Will you be sending out written minutes from this meeting?***

**GW:** I believe we will have some FAQs that will be drafted from this. It will in essence be that way, just as importantly if it is being recorded, and it will be posted on our website. We had one meeting with the fellowship Program Managers and Directors as a group. We had a call last week with the OB GYN Program Managers, and this one will be the third, and this will be posted on our website also if people couldn't see those.

***Phyllis Omani asked about clarification: the plan is to proceed with the June 29th exam for OB GYN, but at 50% capacity?***

**GW:** That is correct, that's our understanding at this point from what we've been told by Pearson VUE. That is correct.



The start time will be between 8:00 a.m. and whatever else they're going to offer us. At this point, we're a little bit unsure of if a candidate does not get confirmation for the June 29th 8:00 a.m., will they receive a cancellation notification. We're working on that with Pearson VUE right now. Those are the same questions we've asked.

The process of how this is all rolling out was told to us, I believe Thursday last week, and so we're asking the same questions, and so I don't know when people will be told that they have a reservation. We don't know how the cancellations will come. We've asked that we be able to communicate in addition. We've asked about what happens if you do get cancelled, will you immediately be offered a time later in the day or a different date, and the answers to those are still being worked out.

It's just we're trying to be as honest and transparent as we can, and unfortunately right now, that means a degree of uncertainty that we're not used to, but we're trying to be as open and honest with you all as we can as we're working through this.

We literally meet four to six hours a day working on these issues, and the more we get from you as far as items to be sure of, the more we can put attention to Pearson VUE to make sure that we roll this out as best possible.

This is not how we normally operate, and this is not how we hope to operate in the future, but like you, you're operating in times where the rules change and the situations change on a daily basis, and we're trying the best we can to move forward knowing that we want to do everything we can in the best interest of the candidates taking the exam, and both in terms of being ready to take the exam and being able to take the exam safely.

I wish we could give you more concrete information, but we don't have it at this point. Dr. Larsen's up at nighttime worrying about these issues because this uncertainty is where we are right now. It's a little less uncertain than it was, but there's still a considerable amount of uncertainty we're facing.

***The policy states that work at home days will count as clinical work. Will this policy carry forward until all affected residents have completed their Qualifying Exam, including 2022 and 2023 graduates?***

**GW:** The answer is yes, that the policies about time off for COVID-related things counting as clinical or research months will apply for all residents in your program, regardless of their year.

Having said that, its certification requirements are a little different than program requirements, so I would urge you to look at the ACGME guidance and decide whether you need to contact the ACGME about significant prolongations of COVID-related absence from training according to their program requirements.

We're happy to work with you and with them however we can, but again, you do not need to take time off from sick time for COVID-related absences for certification, and I can't talk about the ACGME program requirement, so I would urge you to look at those. I hope that makes sense.

***That is confusing to trainees when time limits are loosened. Sometimes trainees quote these changes and time limits as the minimum for graduation. The more clear ABOG and ACGME can be about graduation based on competency to practice independently the better. Time off for COVID, etc. can count, but may not aid in their competence. Confidence is a different issue. The more ABOG and ACGME can emphasize this, the better.***

**GW:** That's a much more broad discussion than then you can have during COVID. Having said that, all credentialing organizations and privileging organizations rely on surgical volume, as well as time in training, and although one can appreciate competency-based outcomes, there really is not as much science behind those as being defensible and fair and reliable as one would hope.

You can imagine the ACGME and the GME community is using this emergency opportunity to push forward with more competency-based assessments to reach the goal that you mentioned, but at this point, external assessments and things like that have to be based on standards, and

at this point, the ones that you can reliably make and monitor and enforce are those based on times and time and training and surgical volume.

I hope that in the future we'll be able to move to a higher threshold, but at this point, some of those are more aspirational than they are reality. I appreciate your comment and hope that we move to that in the future.

***GW: There's one question we've been getting about start dates for residency training.***

ABOG has no policy on start dates of training. The start date of training, if it is on July 1<sup>st</sup>, requires 48 months of training to be eligible for certification. That's what ABMS board standards require is months of training, and that's what programs are accredited for.

If one chooses to start later, middle of July, end of July/August, we've even heard some programs starting September 1st as consideration, that's all well and good. If that is COVID-related, please let us know, and we can talk to you about whether that would require an extension of training beyond the plans finish date of June 30th for that cohort.

We're trying to make flexibility for COVID-related issues, and so that's going to be an issue I think that we would handle on an individual basis, but I anticipate there will be considerable number of programs that will not be starting on July 1st of this year and we're happy to talk with you about that if you want to give us a call as need be.

There are no hands up and no further questions. We want to thank you all for taking the time out of your busy day this morning to help us communicate some issues about our standards going forward. If you have any issues that weren't brought up or questions that weren't brought up, please feel free to call us. Our staff are all working from home but can answer questions about program certification issues, and please let your residents and graduates know that that they can call us at any time in addition, and we'd be happy to address their concerns.