



The ADEX Dental Examination Series

DENTAL CANDIDATE MANUAL

Computer-based Diagnostic Skills
Examination (DSE OSCE)



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American Board of Dental Examiners

EXAM SEASON
2026

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THE ADEX EXAMINATION SERIES



The American Board of Dental Examiners administers the ADEX Dental Examination series, which consists of computer-based and clinical exam components. All examinations are based on specific performance criteria developed by ADEX and other content experts used to measure the clinical competency of candidates.

The ADEX Examination Series & 18-Month Rule

The ADEX Dental Examination series is developed by the American Board of Dental Examiners (ADEX) and consists of both computer-based and clinical exam components. All components or parts of the respective ADEX Examination series must be successfully completed (passing scores) **within 18 months of the initial attempt of any component** of the series.

- **ADEX Dental Examination series components:**
 - **Computer-based**
 - Diagnostic Skills Examination (DSE OSCE)
 - **Clinical** (Refer to the separate [Clinical Candidate Manual](#) for more information.)
 - Fixed Prosthodontic Examination
 - Endodontic Examination
 - Periodontal Examination
 - Anterior Restorative Examination
 - Posterior Restorative Examination

Candidates are responsible for reading and understanding manuals and materials published by the American Board of Dental Examiners and [ADEX Testing Media](#). In conjunction with this manual, refer to the [Candidate Guide](#) (policies) available on the [ADEXtesting.org](#) website for more information regarding the **ADEX 18-Month Rule**, exam eligibility, registration, and other administrative policies.

Standards of Conduct

Integrity of the examination depends on fairness, accuracy and consistency. Established standards of conduct ensure that these principles are adhered to by examiners, candidates, and all individuals and entities involved in examination administration.

Dismissal, failure of the examination or a reduction in an examination score may result from unethical and/or unprofessional conduct (misconduct).

Candidates are required to adhere to these standards of conduct while participating in any examination administered by the American Board of Dental Examiners. Refer to the [Candidate Guide](#) for conduct and examination guidelines resulting in penalties or automatic failure of the examination and/or examination series (e.g. use of prohibited electronic devices, etc.).

EXAM CONTENT & SCORING



Diagnostic Skills Examination (DSE OSCE)

The computer-based **Diagnostic Skills Examination (DSE OSCE)** assesses various levels of diagnosis and treatment planning knowledge, skills, and abilities. Patient simulation is achieved through computer-enhanced photographs, radiographs, optical images of study and working models, laboratory data, and other clinical digitized reproductions.

The exam is designed to progressively assess more complex levels of diagnosis and treatment planning knowledge, skills, and abilities in three primary areas of study.

- 1. Patient Evaluation (PE):** designed to assess the candidate's abilities to recognize critical clinical conditions or situations encountered regularly in the general practice of dentistry.
- 2. Comprehensive Treatment Planning (CTP):** designed to assess the candidate's abilities to recognize critical clinical conditions or situations encountered regularly in the general practice of dentistry, and to identify the appropriate treatment options required for the clinical condition or situation depicted in simulations.
- 3. Cross-Cutting Clinical Judgments:** designed to assess the candidate's abilities to recognize critical clinical conditions or situations encountered regularly in the general practice of dentistry and to formulate appropriate treatment options as well as evaluation of treatment outcomes.

The chart below details exam content areas and the weight of each area of study.

DSE OSCE CONTENT	
Patient Evaluation	20%
Pathology	10%
Physical Evaluation	10%
Anatomy Identification of Systemic Conditions Radiology Lab Diagnostics Therapeutics	
Comprehensive Treatment Planning	60%
Systemic Diseases/Medical Emergencies/ Special Care and Oral Medicine	20%
Periodontal Diagnosis and Treatment Planning	10%
Restorative Dentistry	18%
Specialties	12%
Endodontic Orthodontics Oral Surgery Pediatric Dentistry Prosthodontic	
Cross-Cutting Clinical Judgments	20%
Medical Emergencies	
Infection Control	

Exam Development & Resources



Examination content is developed by a committee of subject matter experts who draw on practice surveys, current curricula, standard of competency, and guidance for clinical licensure examinations in dentistry from the American Association of Dental Boards (AADB) to ensure that the content and protocol of the examination are current and relevant. Examination content and evaluation methodologies are reviewed annually and are updated periodically to reflect current best practices..

Because of the broad-based approach to test development, no single textbook or publication can be used as a reference. The examination is based on concepts taught and accepted by educational institutions accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) or Canadian Commission on Dental Accreditation (CDAC). Any current textbook relevant to the subject matter of the examination utilized in such institutions is suitable as a study reference.

The American Board of Dental Examiners (ADEX) does not offer any study material for this exam. The American Board of Dental Examiners does not sponsor nor endorse examination preparation courses. Candidates bear all risk of any misunderstanding resulting from the use of or reliance on unofficial, non-authorized or third-party information or materials. Candidates must consent to abide by the code of conduct agreement that is presented at the beginning of the examination administration. Violating the code of conduct during (e.g., using unauthorized assistance) or after (e.g., disclosing exam content to others) examination will result in failure and denial of re-examination for one year.

Exam Scoring

Multiple test forms are used to ensure the integrity and security of the examination. To address any possible variation in difficulty level among the various examination forms, equating procedures are used to ensure candidates of comparable competency will be equally likely to pass the examination. Candidates may face up to 165 test items; the total number of test items may vary by form.

Evaluations of candidate performance are made according to defined criteria on a point accrual basis with the potential of earning 150 points, approximately one-third of which are derived from case-based questions. A question may be worth one or more points, while some questions may be awarded partial credit. A small number of pilot questions are embedded throughout the examination that do not affect the candidate's final score.

A minimum scaled score of 75 points or higher is required to pass the DSE OSCE Examination; however, results are reported as Pass/Fail to Candidates and licensing jurisdictions.

Scheduling, rescheduling and cancellation of computer-based exam appointments is managed exclusively through your online [Candidate Profile](#) portal.

To view videos of the exam appointment scheduling process and a tutorial of test item types, refer to the [Test Prep for Computerized Examinations](#) section of the [ADEXtesting.org](#) website.

CANDIDATE PROFILE & EXAM ADMINISTRATION



Refer to the [Candidate Guide](#) for more information regarding candidate profile requirements, exam registration, special accommodations, and administrative policies.

Exam Appointment Scheduling

Computer-based Scheduling. Once registered and authorized, Candidates manage their computer-based Prometric exam appointment scheduling, re-scheduling or cancellation through the green “**Schedule My Exam**” button or “**My Registration**” button of their online [Candidate Profile](#) portal. Once scheduled, Candidates will receive an “**Appointment Confirmation**” **email** directly from donotreply@prometric.com indicating their appointment time, date and location in addition to Prometric Test Center policies.

Candidate Identification Requirements

Your **profile name** must reflect your **legal First and Last names** as displayed on your primary form of government-issued identification.

- **Name Change.** Upload a copy of the supporting name change document (e.g. marriage certificate, dissolution decree, naturalization document, or court order) to your online Candidate Profile **at least 5 business days prior** to your scheduled examination. Once uploaded, [Contact Us](#) for further assistance.

Valid identification, as described below, is required for admittance to any American Board of Dental Examiners administered examination. Candidates who do not have the required valid form(s) of identification risk forfeiture of their examination attempt and registration fees (see **Computer-based Examination & “No Show” Policy**).

- **Computer-based exams.** Only valid, **non-expired** forms of signature-bearing **government-issued photo identification** (e.g. driver license, passport, military ID) are accepted at Prometric Test Center locations.

Special Accommodations

American Board of Dental Examiners will provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations for candidates with documented disabilities or medical condition in those cases where the requested accommodations would not fundamentally alter the measurement of the skills or knowledge the exam is intended to test. American Board of Dental Examiners reserves the right to authorize the use of any modifications in such a way as to maintain the integrity and security of the computer-based examination. Refer to the **Special Accommodation: Computer-based Exams** section of the [Candidate Guide](#) for eligibility and documentation requirements. Note that any granted time extensions are calculated based on the actual test time.

Candidate Attendance & “No Show” Policy

Computer-based Examination & “No Show” Candidate. Candidates are expected to arrive onsite—timely and prepared—at least 30 minutes in advance of the scheduled check-in/start of their computer-based examination appointment.

- **Late Arrival.** Candidates late for the scheduled start of their computer-based examination appointment will be recorded as a “No Show” and forfeit their examination attempt and registration fees.
- **Missing Items.** Candidates who do not have the required valid form(s) of identification are recorded as a “No Show” and forfeit their examination attempt and registration fees.



Exam Administration

The Diagnostic Skills Objective Structured Clinical Examination (DSE OSCE) is a computer-based exam administered at a **Prometric Test Center** location. The appointment seat time is approximately 4.0 hours in length, which includes an introduction and tutorial (15 minutes), optional break between sections (15 minutes), and actual test time (192 minutes).

Test Center Check-In. Candidates should plan to arrive at the Prometric Test Center location at least 30 minutes in advance of their scheduled computer-based exam appointment to accommodate check-in procedures. As part of the check-in process, Prometric staff verifies candidate identification forms and inspects candidate eyewear, headwear, jewelry and other accessories for prohibited devices that would violate security protocols.

Candidates are subject to [Prometric Test Center rules and regulations](#) in addition to American Board of Dental professional conduct policies as defined in the [Candidate Guide](#).

Tutorial. Candidates do not need to be proficient in computer operations to attempt the computer-based examination. A tutorial describing navigation and question types is available in the [Test Prep](#) section of the [ADEXtesting.org](#) website, and also available at the beginning of the exam session before the examination starts. The tutorial section of the exam is timed (15 minutes) but not factored into the overall time allotted for the test.

- **Test Items.** Question or test item types include multiple choice (selected-response), multiple-response, extended match, drop down, fill-in-the-blank, hot spot, and drag & drop.
- **Countdown Timer.** An onscreen countdown timer indicating the overall time allotted and time remaining appears for each applicable section of the examination.
- **Flagging Items for Review.** In each section, candidates may skip or flag items for further consideration and review. Candidates are prompted to review flagged items before completing a section. Once a section is completed, further review or marking is not permitted.

Section 1. Items in this timed section are predominantly independent of one another, but may present situations in which respondents rely on context.

Section 2. Items in this timed section demonstrate a candidates ability to assess more complex levels of diagnosis, and treatment planning knowledge, skills and abilities using patient medical and dental histories, charting, imaging, laboratory data and modeling with access to reference material representing a patient encounter.

Technical Difficulties. The testing area is continuously monitored. Notify the onsite proctor immediately for assistance with any computer-related issues.

A Note about Breaks

During breaks, candidates are prohibited from leaving the testing center prior to exam completion or risk forfeiture of their examination attempt and registration fee. Time adjustments or extensions are not permitted.

Scheduled Break (optional). An automatic 15-minute break is scheduled between the end of Section 1 and the beginning of Section 2. Candidates may opt to take the scheduled break, or proceed directly to Section 2 without taking a break. If a candidate exceeds the scheduled 15-minute break, the timer will restart and continue to countdown the allotted time remaining for the next section.

Unscheduled Break. Candidates may take unscheduled breaks at their discretion; however, the exam is not stopped and the timer will continue to countdown the allotted time remaining for the section and/or exam.



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