



American Board of Oral Medicine Candidate Guide (2026 Edition)

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Welcome!

The American Board of Oral Medicine (ABOM) promotes and maintains the highest standards of teaching, research, and patient care in the specialty of oral medicine for the benefit of the public. In 2020, Oral Medicine was recognized by the American Dental Association as the 11th dental specialty in the United States, with the ABOM serving as the official certifying board.

Achieving Diplomate status is a significant professional milestone. This guide outlines the certification pathway, exam eligibility, policies, and expectations to help candidates prepare effectively.

CERTIFICATION PATHWAY

The ABOM specialty certification process has **three** primary components:

1. **Qualifying Examination (QE)** – Foundational Knowledge Assessment
2. **Oral Clinical Cases Examination (OCCE)** – Clinical Knowledge Assessment
3. **Diplomate Certificate Maintenance** – Recertification every 10 years

Candidates must first pass the QE before attempting the OCCE. Both must be successfully completed within the eligibility window to achieve Diplomate status.

It is the candidate's responsibility to review the ABOM website for all updated policies related to the certification process.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Qualifying Examination (QE)

- Graduation from, or enrollment in the second year of, a CODA-accredited advanced education program in Oral Medicine.
- Membership in an appropriate Oral Medicine organization (e.g., American Academy of Oral Medicine).
- Completed QE application submitted by the published deadline.
- Payment of all required fees.

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Oral Clinical Cases Examination (OCCE)

- Graduation from a CODA-accredited Oral Medicine program.
- Successful completion of the QE.
- Minimum of **18 months of specialty clinical practice** after completion of training, verified by a supervisor, program director, or colleague.
- Membership in an appropriate Oral Medicine organization.
- Completed OCCE application submitted by the published deadline.
- Payment of all required fees.

ELIGIBILITY DURATION

- The five (5) year eligibility period begins at the date of a Candidate's **first QE attempt**, regardless of outcome.
- Both the QE and OCCE must be successfully completed within this period.
- Failure to achieve certification within the 5-year window terminates this eligibility period, prior QE results are forfeited, and the candidate may reapply for a new 5-year eligibility period.

APPLICATION PROCESS

- Applications are submitted online via the ABOM portal: www.abomed.org.
- Deadlines are posted on the ABOM website (typically **8 weeks prior** to each examination).
- It is the Candidate's responsibility to be aware of and meet all deadlines.
- Required documentation:
 - Completed application form
 - One current passport-style photo (2"×2")
 - Proof of active membership in an Oral Medicine organization
- Verification of program enrollment (QE) or proof of practice experience (OCCE) (e.g., letter from program director or current supervisor)

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EXAMINATION FEES

- Application fee: **\$200** (non-refundable)
 - Qualifying Examination (QE) fee: **\$1,200**
 - Oral Clinical Cases Examination (OCCE) fee: **\$1,200**
 - Re-take Fees:
 - QE: **\$1200**
 - OCCE: one case (remote administration): **\$850**
 - OCCE fee: **\$1200**
 - Diplomate Certificate Maintenance (recertification): **\$350**
-

EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION & APPLICATION DATES 2026

Qualifying Examination (QE) Dates

- **Friday, January 9, 2026** – *Application open: November 1, 2025 - December 15, 2025*
- **Friday, June 12, 2026** – *Application open: April 1, 2026 - May 15, 2026*

Oral Clinical Cases Examination (OCCE) Date

- **Wednesday, April 22, 2026** – *Application open February 1, 2026 – March 15, 2026.*
- Exam takes place *in person* at the 2026 AAOM Annual Meeting in Dallas, TX, USA

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EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION

- Exams are designed, validated, and psychometrically reviewed to ensure fairness and accuracy.
- Examination scoring is determined using the Angoff method.
- All candidates must sign and adhere to the ABOM Certifying Examination Honor Code.

QUALIFYING EXAMINATION (QE)

- **Format:**
 - Offered twice yearly (January and June) via ExamSoft® with remote video proctoring.
 - Duration: 6 hours.
 - 300–400 questions (multiple choice and short answer).
 - Divided into 3 sections with 30-minute breaks between sections.
- **Administration & Security:**
 - Exams are taken on Candidate's personal laptop or approved tablet.
 - Proctored with ExamMonitor®, including workspace checks.
 - Candidates must show their workspace is free of devices before starting exam.
 - Candidate's face must remain in camera view, with eyes directed at the monitor throughout.
 - Leaving the frame, looking away, or appearing to converse with another person may be flagged as suspicious.
 - All flagged behavior is reviewed by the ABOM.
 - Persistent violations may be considered a breach of exam procedures or the Honor Code and **can result in exam failure**.
- **Content:**
 - Biomedical foundations: Anatomy, physiology, microbiology, immunology, biochemistry, neuroscience, and pathology as used in evaluating patients with systemic and/or orofacial disease.
 - Orofacial diseases: Epidemiology, pathogenesis, and clinical manifestations of oral and maxillofacial conditions and disorders.
 - Molecular biology: Core concepts relevant to mechanisms of disease and diagnostics.

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- Internal medicine & pathology: Principles necessary to recognize, diagnose, and provide contemporary treatment for orofacial diseases. Assess medically complex patients and recommend modifications for dental and orofacial treatment.
 - Pharmacology: Contemporary pharmacology including indications, mechanisms, interactions, and effects of prescription and over-the-counter drugs in managing systemic conditions and orofacial diseases.
 - Nutrition: Principles of nutrition with emphasis on oral health and orofacial disease.
 - Research & scholarship: Biostatistics, research methodology, critical appraisal of clinical/basic science literature, and scientific writing.
 - Behavioral science & communication: Communication skills with patients, psychological/behavioral assessment, behavior modification, and behavioral therapies.
- **Timeline Leading up to Qualifying Exam**

TWO Weeks Before the Exam:

- **Deadline to pay the examination fee.** If you have not been invoiced, email info@abomed.org.
- Review ExamSoft test-taker guidance:
<https://support.examsoft.com/hc/en-us/categories/11144666860429-Exam-Takers>
Do not wait until the night before the exam to review this..

ONE Week Before the Exam, you will receive two emails:

1. From **ExamSoft™** (noreply@examsoft.com) inviting you to **download the exam** to your device. **Do this immediately** to identify any technical issues. Check your spam/junk folders. If you encounter download or installation problems, contact ExamSoft®
2. From the **ABOM Secretary** (abom.secretary@gmail.com) with final instructions regarding **conduct during the examination**.

EXAM DAY Logistics

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- **Password & restart code:** Emailed at approximately **7:55 AM ET** on exam day.
- **You must start your exam at 8:00 AM EST and will have six (6) hours to complete the exam** The exam will turn off at 2:00 PM EST.
- **Technical readiness:** Ensure stable power and internet for authentication/sync; disable system updates during the window.
- **Results:**
 - Released to each Candidate within 1 month.
 - Reported as **Pass/Fail** only (no numerical scores provided).
 - Significant time is devoted to exam calibration and verification prior to releasing results. **PLEASE DO NOT INQUIRE ABOUT RESULTS IN ADVANCE.**

ORAL CLINICAL CASES EXAMINATION (OCCE)

- **Format:**
 - Administered annually, usually at the AAOM annual meeting (except in 2027, when it will be administered separately).
 - Duration: ~120 minutes.
 - Three standardized clinical case scenarios (~30 minutes each) covering the following domains:
 - Oral mucosal & salivary gland disorders
 - Management of medically complex patients in a dental/oral medicine clinical setting
 - Craniofacial pain & orofacial neurosensory disorders
- **Administration:**
 - Candidates check in 30 minutes early with government-issued ID.
 - Devices are prohibited in the exam room.
 - Two examiners assess each candidate with standardized questions; supplemental clarifications may be asked.

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- **Professional Conduct:** Candidates are expected to demonstrate professionalism, clear communication, and evidence-based reasoning throughout the OCCE. Examiners assess not only knowledge, but also clinical judgment, decision-making, and the ability to translate evidence into patient-centered care.
- **Late Arrival:** Any candidate arriving more than 15 minutes late for an examination will not be permitted to take the examination unless they have received permission from the ABOM. Should a candidate arrive late, but less than 15 minutes late, they will be permitted to take the exam, but the time allotted for examination will be based on the original start time and is not extended due to their tardiness.
- **Content:** Candidates must demonstrate the knowledge, judgment, and skills necessary to function as specialists in Oral Medicine. Specifically, they should be able to:
 - **Assessment & Diagnosis:** Detect and diagnose patients with complex medical problems affecting systemic and/or orofacial regions using clinical findings and appropriate diagnostic tests.
 - **Management:** Employ suitable preventive and management strategies, including pharmacotherapeutics, to address oral manifestations of medical conditions and orofacial problems.
 - **Critical Appraisal:** Critically evaluate scientific literature, update their knowledge base, and assess emerging scientific, medical, and technological issues.
 - **Risk Evaluation:** Perform comprehensive physical evaluations and diagnostic risk assessments in medically complex patients and recommend modifications for dental and orofacial treatment plans.
 - **Diagnostics:** Select and recommend appropriate diagnostic procedures (e.g., laboratory studies, cytology, cultures, biopsy, imaging) to confirm or rule out disease.
 - **Formulation:** Establish differential diagnoses, formulate working diagnoses, prognoses, and management plans for:
 - Oral mucosal disorders
 - Medically complex patients

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- Salivary gland disorders
 - Acute and chronic orofacial pain
 - Orofacial neurosensory disorders
- **Treatment Evaluation:** Critically assess results of treatment and potential adverse effects of such.
- **Adverse Effect Mitigation:** Manage adverse effects related to prescription and over-the-counter medications, illicit drug use, and medical/dental therapies.
- **Communication:** Effectively communicate with patients and other healthcare professionals regarding treatment rationale, risks, benefits, and alternatives.
- **Integration:** Interpret and document advice from healthcare professionals, incorporating it into comprehensive treatment planning.
- **Program Development:** Organize, implement, and evaluate disease control and recall programs for patients.
- **Results:**
 - Released within 1 month.
 - Reported as **Pass/Fail** only (no numerical scores provided).
 - Significant time is devoted to exam calibration and verification prior to releasing results. **PLEASE DO NOT INQUIRE ABOUT RESULTS IN ADVANCE.**

EXAMINATION OUTCOMES

Successful Completion

- Diplomate certificate awarded, valid for 10 years.
- Recertification required every 10 years (exam + fee).
- Diplomates may use terms:
 - “Diplomate of the American Board of Oral Medicine”

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- “Oral Medicine Specialist”

Failure

- **QE:** Score below 70% = failure.
- **OCCE:**
 - If only one of the case categories is failed → candidate receives one re-challenge opportunity in that case category (next year in person, or via Zoom 4–9 months later).
 - If >1 case category is failed → full OCCE must be repeated.
- **Attempts:** Candidates may retest either exam (QE or OCCE) twice. This means a candidate has a total of three (3) attempts to complete either the Qualifying Examination or Oral Clinical Cases Examination. The Qualifying Examination will be offered in January and June, and the Oral Clinical Cases Examination will be offered in-person at the Spring Annual meeting or remotely as a Retake Exam (via Zoom) in between 4 and 9 months after the Spring meeting as determined by the Board (e.g., September).

POLICIES ON FAIRNESS & ACCOMMODATIONS

Fairness

- Exams are reviewed by a psychometrician to minimize bias.
- Examiners with prior training, supervisory, or personal relationships with a candidate must recuse themselves.
- All candidates must sign an **Honor Code** affirming honesty and confidentiality.

Language

- All ABOM examinations are conducted solely in English.
- Lack of English proficiency is not considered a disability, and no language accommodations are available.

Accommodations

- Reasonable accommodations are provided for candidates with documented disabilities, if requested 3 months in advance.

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- Accommodations must not impose undue financial burden on the Board or interfere with valid assessment.

Accommodation Request Process

- Requests must be submitted in writing with the exam application (unless the disability arises later).
- Each request must include:
 - A brief description of the disability
 - The accommodation sought and rationale
 - Documentation from a licensed healthcare provider
- A new request is required for each examination (requests do not carry over).
- The Board may seek independent evaluation at its expense.

APPEALS

- Appeals must be submitted in writing to the President of the ABOM within 30 days of receiving results.
- Appeals must state specific reasons and include supporting documentation.
- Appeals based only on disagreement with examiner judgment or exam content are invalid.
- Only claims of improper conduct, flawed administration, or mitigating circumstances will be considered.
- The Appeals Committee will not re-grade exams.

WITHDRAWALS & CANCELLATIONS

Candidate Withdrawal

- Withdrawals must be submitted in writing to the ABOM President or Executive Director at least two weeks before exam: fees may be transferred for up to two years (unless in the final year of eligibility).
- Less than 14 days notice or failure to appear for an examination requires a new application and payment of fees.

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Exam Cancellation by ABOM

- If ABOM must cancel or reschedule due to unforeseen circumstances, another opportunity to test will be provided as soon as possible.
 - ABOM is not responsible for candidate expenses related to a canceled or rescheduled exam.
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MORAL & ETHICAL STANDARDS

Certification or recertification may be denied if there are concerns about a Candidate's competence or integrity. Grounds include:

- Revoked, restricted, or inactive dental license
- Felony conviction or plea of no contest
- Physical or psychological conditions (including substance use disorder) impairing safe practice

Candidates must attest to their credentials and provide any information requested by the Board.

HONOR CODE & PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

- No unauthorized assistance during exams.
- No recording, distribution or discussion of exam content.
- No use of unauthorized electronic devices.
- Independent, honest participation.

Violations may result in exam failure, forfeiture of eligibility, and referral to licensing bodies.

The Board may also deny certification if there are substantial concerns about a candidate's professional conduct, ethical behavior, or ability to practice safely.

DIPLOMATE MAINTENANCE

- Certification valid for 10 years.
 - Diplomates must complete Maintenance of Certification (MOC) requirements:
 - Continuing education
 - Recertification exam
 - Recertification fee payment
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CONTACT INFORMATION

For the most up-to-date information, visit: www.abomed.org

Questions may be directed to:

American Board of Oral Medicine Administrative Office

 [info@abomed.org]