



A PROGRAM OF
THE AGA INSTITUTE

Administrative Handbook

8th Annual

**AGA
Gastroenterology
Training
ExaminationSM
(GTE)[®]**

**Exam Testing Window:
March 1-15, 2012**

AGA Institute



8th Annual AGA Gastroenterology Training ExaminationSM (GTE)[®] Exam Testing Window: March 1-15, 2012

Eighth edition of the *Gastroenterology Training Examination (GTE) Administrative Handbook*. **Revised December 2011. This edition supersedes all previous editions.**

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The GTE has been developed in collaboration with the University of Michigan, Department of Medical Education, Ann Arbor, MI, herein referred to as “test consultant” and Yardstick Software, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada a full-service testing company.

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Acknowledgment

The AGA Institute funds the GTE to support the professional development of all gastroenterology fellows.

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Introduction

The American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) Institute

The American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) is dedicated to the mission of advancing the science and practice of gastroenterology. Founded in 1897, AGA is the oldest medical specialty society in the United States. Comprised of two non-profit organizations — the AGA and the AGA Institute — our 17,000 members include physicians and scientists who research, diagnose and treat disorders of the gastrointestinal tract and liver.

GTE Overview

The GTE is an assessment and benchmark for both training programs and fellows to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. Overall, the exam is designed to enhance clinical care and research by advancing the quality and consistency of gastroenterology (GI) training programs nationwide. Through the use of a common evaluative tool, programs and fellows will be able to gauge their progress over time, measure their performance against national averages, and make adjustments to the curriculum or study plan as appropriate.

The exam is a formal, closed-book exam and will be offered to all gastroenterology fellows. The GTE is administered as a 4.0-hour online exam and consists of 180 multiple choice items (questions) covering a broad spectrum of GI and liver topics.

While the GTE is a formal exam, it is **not** pass/fail in nature. The exam should be regarded as a “no-pressure” experience by both fellows and programs. Examinees are discouraged from studying for the GTE so that it may prove an accurate measure of where they are in their training. Fellows are encouraged to study where necessary and remediate any deficiencies following the GTE.

Purpose

The GTE is an educational resource designed to measure the progress of training and the curricula and to promote continuous improvement by training programs and fellows. It is not designed as an instrument to assess the general competence of a fellow. **The exam should not be used to justify promotions or deny advancement.** Scores should be used to provide educational counseling where needed.

Equally important, the GTE is not designed to comment on the quality of a training program. The GTE will not make direct performance comparisons among fellows or programs. National averages are provided as a benchmark to allow programs and fellows to evaluate if, and where, adjustments in training may be necessary. As data and qualitative information are gathered, AGA Institute will be able to assist training programs in identifying common challenges and best practices.

The results of the GTE are not to be used for marketing purposes and may not be disclosed outside of the institution beyond the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). The AGA Institute will not disclose, under any circumstances, the names of

examinees or institutions participating in the GTE. Questions related to the purpose of the GTE should be directed to the AGA Institute.

Copyright

The AGA Institute holds all proprietary rights to the GTE. To protect the integrity of the exam and to ensure the validity of scores, training programs and examinees must adhere to strict guidelines regarding proper conduct in handling copyrighted proprietary materials. Any attempt to reproduce all or part of an exam is strictly prohibited by law.

Violations include, but are not limited to: Removing materials from the test site, aiding others by any means in reconstructing any portion of an exam; selling, distributing, receiving, or having unauthorized possession of any portion of an exam. In the event of a suspected breach, scores will be withheld.

If a violation is determined, the examinee and/or training program may be barred from participating in future GTEs.

Content

The content areas to be covered and their proportion on the GTE are provided below. The exam does not cover every aspect of GI and liver content; however, every effort was made to ensure the relevancy of all exam items. The items by content area are distributed randomly throughout the exam.

Category (Content Area)	% of Exam Items	# of Exam Items
Liver	25%	45
Colon	15%	27
Stomach and Duodenum	15%	27
Esophagus	10%	18
Pancreas	10%	18
Small Bowel	10%	18
Biliary tract	8%	14
General (systemic disorders, nutrition, literature interpretation, statistics, epidemiology, ethics)	7%	13
		180 total

Some items may require that the examinee interpret pictures, including radiographs, computed tomograms and angiograms, endoscopic photographs, photographs of physical findings, photomicrographs of biopsy specimens, ultrasonograms (including endoscopic ultrasonograms), radionuclide scans and manometric tracings.

Cognitive Levels

The GTE will measure the fellow's ability to recall factual information, interpret clinical data and solve problems.

- **Knowledge** – the exam will test knowledge of basic facts and terms/definitions.
- **Application** – the exam will test ability to understand medical concepts and apply them to specific situations. These items, presented as case studies, will require critical thinking, analysis and problem-solving.

GTE Administration

Examination Scheduling

Due to the web-based nature of the exam, training programs will be able to select times that are best suited to their schedules. The test window is **March 1-15, 2012**. A total of 4.5 hours will be allotted to administer the exam (4.0 hours for the exam and 30 minutes for orientation).

Registration and Payment

To ensure exam security and consistency in administration, only training directors or exam proctors will be able to register fellows and remit payment for the GTE. The exam fee is \$250 per fellow. Payment may be remitted by check or credit card. The AGA Institute will also invoice the program upon request. Invoices are due in full upon receipt. Fellows will not be permitted to sit for the examination if invoices are not paid by the selected test date. Registration is online and may be found on AGA's web site: www.gastro.org/GTE.

Registration deadline is Wednesday, February 1, 2012

Cancellations and Refunds

The AGA Institute must receive written cancellation notices by **Thursday, February 23, 2012**. There is a \$50 non-refundable registration fee for all cancellations. Any notice received after this date is ineligible for a refund. An examinee who does not appear for the exam or for which the AGA Institute does not receive a written cancellation notice is considered a "no-show" and forfeits 100% of the exam fee.

Cancellation notices **must be sent by the training program director**. Cancellation notices can be emailed to GTE@gastro.org or faxed to (301)-652-3890, attention GTE. Refunds will be processed upon cancellation.

Special Accommodations

Examinees with documented visual, physical, hearing or learning disabilities, generally covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that would prevent them from taking the exam under standard conditions may request special accommodations and arrangements by checking the box on the registration form. In addition, a letter from an appropriate licensed professional should be e-mailed to GTE@gastro.org detailing the request for special accommodations.

Emergencies

The following emergency situations may qualify for a refund of the exam:

- Hospitalization of the fellow or immediate family member
- Death in the immediate family
- Jury or Military duty

A request for a refund based upon an emergency, **must be submitted in writing and signed by the training director**. This notice should be sent within **five business days** of the emergency. The notice should specify the examinee's name and nature of the emergency.

Examination Confidentiality and Security

The GTE is the sole proprietary material of the AGA Institute. By purchasing the GTE, training programs agree to assume responsibility for maintaining the confidentiality and security of these AGA Institute proprietary materials.

Site Standards and Examination Preparation

To ensure that all examinees are tested under comparable conditions and that their results represent a fair measure of their knowledge base, it is important for the AGA Institute to maintain a standardized testing environment from one exam site to the next. The following guidelines will delineate the standards to be upheld by the training programs and their assigned proctors.

- ✓ Assign a proctor (lay staff) to administer the exam(s). **Proctors cannot be training directors, medical personnel or relatives, friends or supervisors of examinees.** See the **Proctor Guidelines** section for more information.
- ✓ Ensure that the testing room is clean and that the environment is suitable. This includes such factors as a comfortable temperature, quiet surroundings, sufficient air quality and appropriate lighting for viewing the testing computer's monitor. The room must be free of charts, posters or other materials that may serve as references or sources for answers. Place a sign on the door that reads "Quiet Please. Exam in Progress."
- ✓ Provide the location of the exam site to the proctor and each examinee. Confirmation of the location should be provided at least one week in advance of

the GTE. Immediately notify the examinees and the proctor of any changes.

- ✓ Provide adequate space under their desk for examinees to store all personal items (e.g., purses, briefcases, book bags).
- ✓ Provide accessibility for those with physical disabilities (e.g., wheelchair accessible).
- ✓ The proctor should, in advance log on to all testing computers to ensure that the computer systems and Internet connections are working correctly with the Yardstick CBT network. See the **Testing Technology** section below for further information.

Testing Technology

The GTE is now an online only exam. The following guidelines will facilitate a smooth examination experience. The technology is provided by Yardstick Software.

The method for accessing the secure system from the test center is the use of Internet Explorer 8.0 or 9.0, or Firefox 4.0 (or greater), or Google Chrome using the address <http://gastro.proexams.com>. The homepage provides access to the secure area of the Yardstick exam interface.

System Requirements

The minimum requirements for the testing center are as follows:

- Internet Explorer 8.0 or 9.0 or Mozilla Firefox version 4.0 or higher, or Google Chrome.
- High Speed Internet access
- Three feet of space between each computer

Proctor Guidelines

Proctor Responsibilities

The training director is responsible for selecting a proctor from his/her lay staff, such as the fellowship coordinator or administrative assistant. **Training directors or other medical professionals are ineligible to serve as proctors.**

Proctors are an integral part of the success of the GTE. They are responsible for ensuring that the exam runs smoothly and becomes a positive experience for examinees. They are equally responsible for ensuring that examinees are tested under comparable conditions so that the test accurately measures their knowledge and skills. It is important that proctors assist the AGA Institute in maintaining a standardized testing environment from one exam site to the next.

Proctors must carefully review these **Proctor Guidelines** as well as the **GTE Orientation** (page 15) to become familiar with the administrative procedures and should read this information at least one week prior to the exam. If there are any questions, please be encouraged to immediately contact the AGA Institute.

The GTE is to be administered promptly as scheduled with a time block of 4.5 hours. Proctors must arrive at the exam site at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled exam to set up the exam room.

Examinee Check-In and Testing Procedures

The Training Director/Proctor will receive the Examinee Username and Password that is needed for each examinee assigned to their test location to begin the exam.

Examinees will be asked to present one valid (current) government-issued photo identification that includes their signature. Acceptable identification includes a driver's license, state issued ID card, passport, or military ID. Unacceptable identification includes library cards, school IDs, credit or department store cards, ID with signature only and no picture, and gym ID cards.

After identification is verified, the examinee will sign the Examination Roster that the proctor has printed. The proctor verifies the name on the roster with the ID presented and compares the photo with the examinee.

Policies and procedures that will govern the administration of the GTE are outlined below to assist proctors in carrying out their responsibilities.

- Examinees are required to follow all proctor instructions.
- Examinees will not be permitted to have anything other than exam materials distributed by the proctor on top of their work surface. Personal items, such as purses, backpacks, briefcases, etc., should be stored under the desk or elsewhere in the room, but not on the work surface. **All cell phones and pagers are to be completely turned off and given to the proctor before testing begins.**

- No food or drink is allowed at the exam site.
- Scratch paper will be supplied to the test candidates by the proctor. All scratch paper is to be collected at the end of each test session and returned with all other examination materials.
- The testing program keeps track of the remaining time for the test and will automatically stop after the allotted 4.0 hours (breaks are excluded from the 4.0 hours).

In addition, the proctor must:

- Remain in the testing center at all times during the administration of an examination.
- Monitor all examinees at all times. Monitoring may be performed by walking through the testing room on a regular basis.
- **Never** give a login username and password to an individual other than the examinee for which it was assigned. Each user id and password is unique to an individual examinee.
- Distribute scratch paper. An examinee may **NOT** bring his/her own scratch paper to the testing room.
- Never allow an examinee to view the examination content prior to the start of the examination.

Break

Only ONE examinee may leave the testing room at a time for a restroom break and only one break is permitted for each examinee. There will be no additional time added to the 4.0-hour examination timeframe. Breaks are not counted toward the overall 4.0 hours of examination time.

If the examinee requires a restroom break, the examinee must click on the “Pause” button, which will pause the exam and stop the time. The candidate must NOT click on the “Finish” button.

The examinee must sign out on the Examination Roster and then sign back in on the Roster to document departure from, and return to, the testing room.

After-Break Login

If the examinee requires a restroom break, the examinee must click on the “Pause” button, which will pause the exam. Upon return, the examinee will return to their computer and log back in with their original username and password. Upon login, the examinee will see an EXAMS IN PROGRESS link, which is where the examinee clicks to resume their exam.

Government-issued photo identification is necessary to re-enter. The timer will resume when the examinee continues the exam.

Dismissal from the Examination

Disruptive or inappropriate behavior by any examinee during an examination is grounds for the examinee's dismissal. Any examinee engaging in this type of behavior must be asked to leave by the proctor, and then the proctor must contact the AGAI immediately.

If a proctor observes an examinee cheating by using testing aides, the proctor is not to confront the examinee; rather the proctor must contact the AGAI immediately. The proctor should try to obtain a second witness to the cheating event, if possible, by asking another proctor or staff member to observe the behavior.

Administering the Exam

Starting the Examination

Access the examination using the address <http://gastro.proexams.com> . **NOTE:** Access to the examination is *only* available during the testing window, **March 1-15, 2012.**

The homepage provides access to the secure area of the Yardstick exam interface. Once the examinee is logged in, he/she will be brought to a screen to enter his/her contact information. Once this is entered, the examinee will be brought to the screen and choose to review the tutorial or begin the exam.

NOTE: If any technical difficulties are experienced when administering the exam, contact Yardstick, the AGA Institute's exam vendor, at support@getyardstick.com, 888-881-1005 or 587-881-1528. Yardstick will have support staff at the ready to respond to your request immediately.

Hours of Support:

Monday-Saturday, 8:00 am-7:00 pm EDT

PLUS

24 Hour Overnight Support on Wednesday, March 7 and Wednesday, March 14.

Tutorial

The proctor will advise each examinee to go through the tutorial to become comfortable with the interface. The system automatically provides the candidate ten minutes to complete the tutorial. Examinees may spend less than ten minutes or they can skip the tutorial altogether.

Normal Lab Values

The normal lab values table has been embedded as a link on the exam platform. At the bottom of each question, there is a link titled, *Click Here to Access the Normal Laboratory Values*. For examinees to be able to access the normal lab values link, please ensure with your IT professional that the web browsers on examinee computers can allow pop-up windows. In addition as a back-up, we will also provide the lab values as a handout to proctors to distribute to examinees should they *prefer* to use the hardcopy handouts as opposed to the lab values embedded link on the exam platform.

Examinee's Questions

If an examinee asks questions on any content specific to the exam, the proctor must inform the examinee that he/she is unable to answer content questions and that the examinee should contact the AGAI immediately.

Monitoring the Testing Room

The proctor **must** monitor the testing room at all times and frequently walk around the room to observe all examinees and computer screens.

Reporting Incidents

The proctor must notify AGAI immediately if an unusual situation occurs, including, but not limited to, suspected cheating; copying or misuse of any software applications, test materials or documentation; theft, misplacement or loss of any confidential information or materials (including exhibits, software, applications, scratch paper, etc.), computer media or hardware.

Examination Completion

When the examinee has finished with the examination, they will have the option to take a survey or log out of the exam.

The AGA has developed a brief survey to help us better understand the examinee's perception and preparation of the exam. Examinees will be asked to take the survey after they have completed the exam. They will be notified that the survey is not mandatory and that their decision whether or not to take the survey will have no implication on their scores/score reporting. The examinee will then be prompted to either take the survey or log out. Your assistance in encouraging your trainees to take the survey would be greatly appreciated by the AGA.

The proctor must ensure that the examinee has fully ended their session by verifying that they have exited the examination interface and that the browser is completely closed.

NOTE: Should an examinee choose to take the survey, they will be automatically "logged out" of the exam interface once they've completed the survey. Please be sure to close the browser once the survey has been completed.

After the Exam

Materials to Return to the AGA Institute

After completion of all exams within your institution, all examinee rosters, scratch paper and normal lab values handouts must be returned by **March 22, 2012** to: **AGA Institute, Attn: Joy Akinyi, 4930 Del Ray Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814.**

Score Reports

Once the examinee has completed and ended the examination, the examinee will view a screen that has a message that tells them when to expect their test results and how these results will be transmitted from AGAI. The score report will not appear on the examinee's computer screen.

In May, program directors will be mailed two types of Score Reports; one for the training program and one for the examinee. Both reports will provide:

- The number of questions answered correctly within each content area,
- Mean percent correct scores,
- Percentile rankings and stratification of scores by year of fellowship, and
- National averages within all content areas.
- List of learning objectives for incorrectly answered questions.

Score Reports to Fellows: The Score Report to fellows will include their individual performance, along with national statistics.

Score Reports to Programs: Features a similar breakdown of scores by content areas as presented on the fellows' Score Report. Disclosed examinee names to be given to the training director to facilitate educational counseling. Programs will also receive a copy of individual fellows' score reports.

Score Validity

All scores will be analyzed and evaluated by the test consultant to ensure reliability and validity. If item irregularities are found, score reports will be noted and scores will be adjusted accordingly.

Post-Exam Survey

Immediately following the exam, examinees will have the option of taking a post-exam survey. The survey is embedded as a link at the end of the exam on the log-out page. Please note that all the survey questions are optional.

In May 2012, training programs will be sent a brief survey for directors to complete.

The names of respondents will not be disclosed; however, general comments may be shared with training programs. The AGA Institute will use the information to identify further enhancements to the GTE, *the Gastroenterology Core Curriculum*, and other resources for training programs.

GTE Orientation

Proctors, please read these instructions out loud to all examinees promptly at the scheduled time of the exam. After the conclusion of the GTE, you may discard this Orientation.

My name is _____ and I will be proctoring the Gastroenterology Training Examination (GTE) today. The AGA Institute, headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, would like to thank you for participating in the 8th Annual GTE.

Following this Orientation, you will be given 4.0 hours to complete the GTE. If you need to take a break, please click on the “Pause” button located in the top right corner of the exam interface. DO NOT click the “Finish” button. I can only excuse one examinee at a time, so please limit your break to 10 minutes in the event someone is waiting. (*Proctor, please provide directions to the restrooms, if necessary*).

Time will be kept by the computer; at the end of 4.0 hours the program will stop the examination.

If you complete your GTE early, please conclude your session by clicking the “Finish”, clicking the log out button and closing the browser. You will then be directed to the log out page where you can either take a Post-Exam Survey or click “Log Out” and close the browser.

Enlarging and Zooming Images

To enlarge and zoom into exam images, please do the following:

For PC users:

1. First click on the image, which should appear in new pop-up window.
2. Press Ctrl + (to enlarge) or Ctrl – (to decrease size) as many times as needed to adjust image size.
3. Scroll bars should appear to help navigate the image.

For MAC users:

1. First click on the image, which should appear in new pop-up window.
2. Press Command + (to increase) or Command – (to decrease) as many times as needed to adjust image size.
3. Scroll bars should appear to help navigate the image.

Post-Exam Survey

The AGA has developed a brief survey to help better understand your perception and preparation of the exam. Please complete this survey by clicking the **survey link**. Although the survey is **not** mandatory, your participation would be greatly appreciated.

NOTE: Your decision to take the survey or not will have no implication on your scores/score reporting. If you prefer not to take this survey, please click the “Log Out” link.

Do you have any questions?

Special Acknowledgement

We thank you.

**The AGA Institute wishes to sincerely thank
all
training directors and proctors
for their role in helping to
successfully administer
the 8th Annual GTE.**
