

VIRTUAL APPLIED EXAM

CANDIDATE PROCEDURES MANUAL

JUNE 2021

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2021 Virtual APPLIED Exam Administration

The ABA is administering virtual APPLIED Exams (VAEs) in 2021. We will conduct the VAE in a manner consistent with our usual processes for in-person exams with modifications as required by the virtual format.

Both the Standardized Oral Exam (SOE) and the Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE) will be administered via the Zoom videoconferencing platform. In working to adapt the APPLIED Exam for a virtual administration, our goal is to provide you with a high-quality, fair and professional exam that allows you to demonstrate the qualities and attributes required to become an ABA diplomate. We seek to maintain the integrity of the APPLIED Exam and to avoid preventable technical issues.

Our Board of Directors and staff have worked diligently to create a VAE administration that provides a positive experience for our candidates and volunteer examiners. This guide provides logistical and technical information to help prepare you for the virtual SOE and OSCE components. You can access this guide and other candidate resources at: https://theaba.org/candidate_virtual_exam.html.

If you have any questions, please contact us at APPLIEDexam@theaba.org or (866) 999-7501.

Candidate Requirements

EXAM LOCATION

You will not need to travel to a test center, but you will need to identify a quiet, distraction-free private room in your home or office where you can take your exam. You may choose to work with your institution to identify a quiet, secure location with a reliable high-speed internet connection for the exam, but you are not required to take the exam at your workplace.

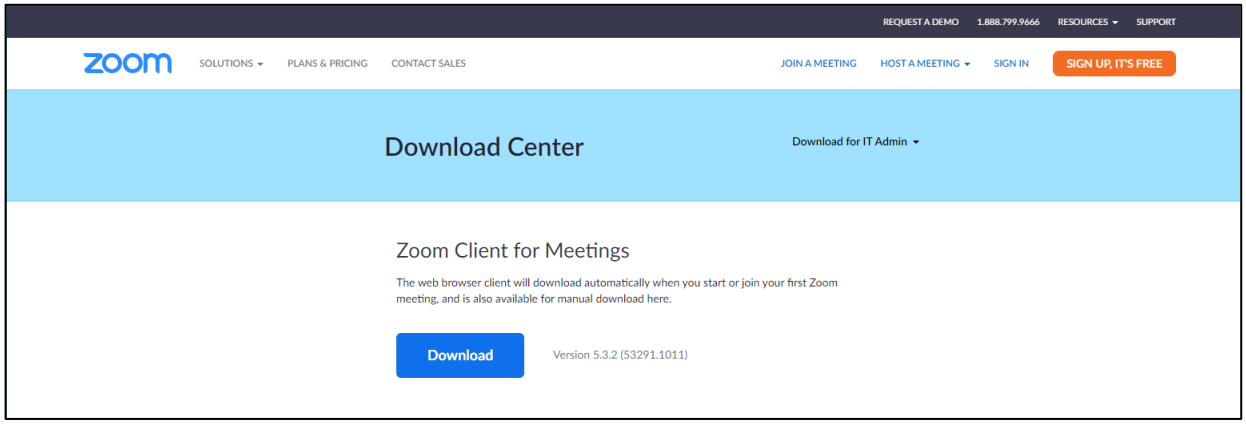
Requirements:

- The space must be well-lit.
- The test environment or camera view of the test environment should be as clear of personalized information as possible (e.g., academic degrees, family photos, etc.). This does not mean that the space must be specifically designated for the virtual APPLIED Exam, but it should not be set up or staged to inform the examiners about your background.
- The desk or table in the exam location should be free of clutter and unnecessary materials.
- **Virtual backgrounds are NOT permitted.**
- You are permitted to have blank paper, a pen or pencil and water to drink.
- Only you can be in the test environment from the time you log into the exam until your exam ends. Other persons, including children, are prohibited, as are pets.

ZOOM ACCOUNT

If you do not have a Zoom account, download and install the free Zoom application (Zoom Client for Meetings) prior to your exam.

The Zoom link to access your exam will be emailed to you from APPLIEDexam@theaba.org one week before your exam.



EQUIPMENT AND INTERNET SPEED REQUIREMENTS

The VAE relies on the use of functional equipment and adequate internet access. You will need a laptop or desktop computer with a webcam and a Zoom account. Your internet connection, camera, microphone and sound must support simultaneous use of a Zoom video conference and a web browser displaying an ABA website.

You must test the equipment and internet connection you will use before your exam. We will send you an email with instructions to conduct a system check approximately one week before your exam date. If you do not complete the system check and have a technical issue that causes your exam to be terminated, your exam will be rescheduled and you will be assessed a $500 rescheduling fee.

DESKTOP OR LAPTOP

You must have a desktop or laptop device connected to the internet and a webcam (internal or external). **Phones or tablets may NOT be used.**

CHARGER

The device must always be plugged into an outlet or charger during the exam.

SUPPORTED WEB BROWSERS

- **Google Chrome version 64+ (or later) is required to view your exam information, including patient stems.** Other browsers may work with Zoom, but Google Chrome 64+ is required. Safari will NOT work.
- Click to download Google Chrome.

SUPPORTED PROCESSOR AND RAM

- Processor
  - Dual Core 2 GHz or higher recommended (i3/i5/i7 or AMD Equivalent)
- RAM
  - 4GB or more recommended

INTERNET SPEED

- Internet speed needs to be sufficient to allow a smooth Zoom video meeting.
- Download speed should reach 15 Mbps per second or higher.
- For optimal internet speed throughout the exam, please ensure that other devices sharing the internet connection are not streaming, downloading, or conducting tasks that may consume internet bandwidth.
- A wired connection would provide the best experience but is not mandatory.

AUDIO AND VIDEO

- You must have a web camera to allow interactive audio and videoconferencing. You may use the built-in camera and audio from the computer or use external audio and video options such as a headset, USB-connected microphone, or camera.
- To avoid any battery issues, we discourage using a Bluetooth headset. If you decide to use a headset for the exam, we recommend using a wired headset.
- **You are not permitted to join the Zoom meeting by phone; you must use the computer audio.**
- For audio, the Zoom desktop client on Windows supports buttons for devices made by these manufacturers: Aver, Crestron, Jabra, Logitech, Plantronics, Polycom, Shure, Yamaha, and Yealink.
- You will need sufficient screen space to simultaneously view two examiners and the exam materials (e.g., patient information). A standard 12-inch laptop monitor is the minimum recommended size; however, larger monitors are preferred.
- It is also important to have an appropriate screen display resolution (e.g. 1920 x 1080). A dual monitor system should NOT be used as there will be an expectation that candidates will maintain eye contact with the examiners (see below).

Exam Day

Approximately one week prior to the exam, we will email you an ABA site link that will provide access to your specific exam and exam materials. The email will be sent from APPLIEDexam@theaba.org. On your exam day, click on the email link at the scheduled time to begin your exam, and remain logged in until your exam ends.

You will be placed in a Zoom waiting room. A welcome message will appear on your screen, signaling that the VAE administrator is aware that you have arrived and will be with you shortly. **The wait time may be as long as 15 minutes for the SOE and 20 minutes for the OSCE.** The administrator will admit one candidate at a time into a separate Zoom registration room to complete registration (see next section). Once you have completed registration, the VAE administrator will move you into the orientation and exam rooms according to your exam schedule.

The virtual APPLIED Exam consists of both the SOE and the OSCE components for candidates who are required to take both components. Candidates can take both parts on the same day. Each exam component will be taken via a separate session and will have a separate ABA site link.

REGISTRATION AND SECURITY PROTOCOLS

You will be required to participate in several steps when you login to ensure the security of the exam. These steps take place before exam materials are presented and before you interact with the SOE examiners or standardized patients/clinicians and exam facilitators in the OSCE stations.

When you click on the ABA site link, a Virtual APPLIED Exam Release will appear, along with the Zoom meeting link. After clicking on the meeting link, which places you in the Zoom waiting room, you must read and consent to the Virtual APPLIED Exam Release shown on your browser by clicking "I agree."

Candidate Attestation

- You will consent to having the entirety of your exam encounter recorded for quality assurance and training purposes. You will agree that you have no rights to or ownership interest in the video or audio of your performance.
- You will confirm to having read, understood and signed the APPLIED Exam attestation when you registered for the APPLIED Exam.
- You will acknowledge your understanding that if you attempt to record, transmit or transcribe any portion of this examination, your exam will be invalidated, you will forfeit your registration fee, and you will be ineligible for ABA certification according to our Policy Book. The ABA will proactively employ measures to identify breaches of this agreement (e.g. publication of exam materials on-line, uploading of audio or video of examination sessions to discussion groups) and, in addition to ABA sanctions, will prosecute those responsible under any and all applicable state and federal laws, including copyright laws.
- You will acknowledge your agreement that you will not seek assistance from other people (whether in-person or remote) or reference materials (books, pre-written notes, computer programs, online reference resources) during the exam and acknowledge your understanding that failure to comply with this stipulation will result in invalidation of your examination, forfeiture of your registration fee, and ineligibility for ABA certification according to our Policy Book.

See Appendix A for a copy of the full attestation.

Identification

- When the VAE Administrator admits you into the registration room, you will be asked to present an unexpired, government-issued picture identification such as a driver's license or passport. The first and last name must match your name as it appears in your ABA portal account.

Prohibited Items

- For the duration of the exam, you may not access written or electronic materials or operate phones, tablets, or other electronic devices. Doing so compromises the security of the exam and may result in termination of the test appointment, invalidation of your score, and exclusion from the board certification process according to our Policy Book.

- **Your mobile devices, including phones, may not be present in the room where you are taking your exam.**

Eyes on the Screen

- It is recognized that within the norms of an oral exam, candidates will occasionally glance at their notes or look down or away while thinking. In general, however, you should keep your eyes on the computer screen and look at the examiner who is currently speaking with you.
- Non-compliance with this requirement may lead the examiners to suspect that you are receiving help from external sources and can lead to termination of the exam.

TEST ENVIRONMENT/PROFESSIONAL APPEARANCE REQUIREMENT REMINDER

- You must follow the exam location requirements as described in the Candidate Requirements: Exam Location section.
- ABA staff may ask you to demonstrate all parts of your exam room using the webcam.
- You must be dressed in professional business attire.

FACE MASKS

- The ABA's intent is to deliver a fair exam in a safe environment. Communication to and from examiners and candidates is better when face masks are not worn. The expectation is that candidates and examiners will be alone in a quiet, private location during the exam. This will be the optimal environment for exam administration.
- If this is the case – and it should be the norm – then wearing a mask in this socially distanced location seems unnecessary. If you are in a location in which you cannot socially distance, then you should not be taking the exam in that location.
- However, we recognize that data and guidelines are evolving, and local mandates may differ. In circumstances in which institutional guidelines mandate mask wearing even in private locations and/or if a person's domestic situation requires that masks be worn, masks will be permitted.

EXAM ADMINISTRATION

All exam sessions will be recorded.

SOE

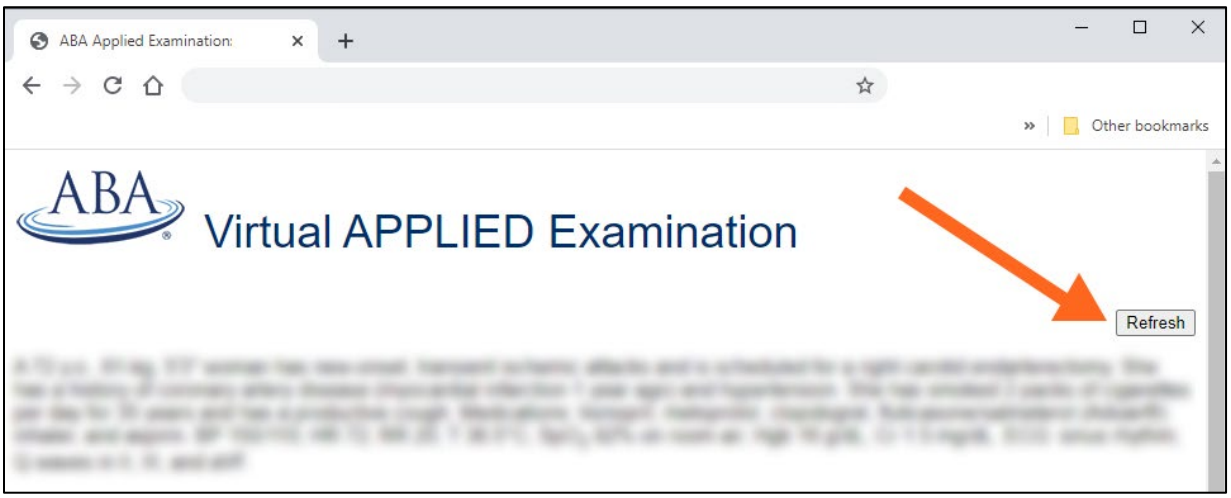
- The SOE will consist of two sessions during which you will be examined by two examiners. The duration of each session will be increased from the usual 35 minutes to 40 minutes to allow for the "lag time" associated with conversations over internet platforms and to provide a buffer to ensure you have a full exam, even in the event of an easily-resolvable technical issue. Each examiner will be in a separate location and will appear continuously in split-screen format on the screen.
- Following registration, the VAE administrator will admit you and other candidates to the virtual orientation room. The video and audio from each candidate will be continuously recorded. After explanation of the exam processes, we will display the exam stem for your first exam session. You will have approximately 20 minutes to study this material and prepare before you are admitted to your first exam room. (The stem will continue to be available to

you on your screen during the exam.) Once you have been admitted to your first exam room, the exam will begin with the first 40-minute session. The two examiners will introduce themselves and confirm that you all have the same exam stem.

- Examiners will alert you with one minute remaining that your first exam session is coming to an end. After this first session, you will be moved back to the orientation room and will immediately see the exam stem for your second session. You will have approximately 10 minutes to review this second, shorter stem before being moved into the second exam room.
- You will receive a one-minute warning by an examiner that your second exam session is coming to an end. At the conclusion of the second session, an administrator will move you back to the virtual orientation room. Your SOE will then be over, and the administrator will instruct you to log out of the Zoom meeting.
- See Appendix B for a guide to a virtual SOE.

OSCE

- The OSCE is an 84-minute exam with seven, eight-minute encounters preceded by four-minute study breaks for the Communications & Professionalism stations and three-minute study breaks for the Technical stations to review your next scenario.
- You will interact via videoconference with standardized patients or standardized clinicians in the Communications & Professionalism stations and non-physician exam facilitators in the Interpretation of Monitors and Interpretation of Echocardiograms stations. **You will not participate in the Ultrasonography station during the virtual exam.**
- Following registration and orientation, the VAE administrator will admit you into a virtual exam room where you will remain for the duration of the OSCE component.
- At the beginning of the study period, your current OSCE station stem will display on the browser window where your attestation appeared earlier.
- Click the **Refresh** button at the top right of your screen if the stem does not automatically appear. You can use the Refresh button as many times as needed during the OSCE.



- At the end of each study period, a standardized patient or exam facilitator will enter your exam room to begin the encounter.

- You will be logged out of the Zoom meeting after you have completed your rotation through all seven stations.
- See Appendix C for a series of screen shots guiding you through a virtual OSCE.

BREAKS, INTERRUPTIONS, AND TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

Scheduled Breaks

- If you are taking both the SOE and OSCE on the same day, there will be at least a 20-minute break between the components. Once a component of the APPLIED Examination (SOE or OSCE) begins, no breaks are scheduled.

Unscheduled Breaks

- Unscheduled breaks are not permitted during the virtual exam.

Technical Problems

- We understand that technical issues related to internet audio and video connectivity may occur for both candidates and examiners. We have included technical specifications and other important information in this manual to minimize these issues.
- You can request support for technical issues during the exam by activating the "?" function in Zoom. Your message will be sent to the VAE administrator for assistance.
- The Board has developed contingency plans to allow every candidate to perform to the best of their ability. If technical problems occur during your exam that cannot be resolved within 5 minutes, your examiners and/or ABA staff will have the authority to terminate the exam.
    - The technical issues will be documented, and you will be contacted by ABA exam staff to discuss retest options.
    - Candidates who have interrupted test appointments due to technical issues will be offered a retest at no additional fee in the same week, if possible, and potentially later that same day. If any SOE session is interrupted, candidates will retake both SOE sessions.
    - If you do not complete the system check and have a technical issue that causes your exam to be terminated, your exam will be rescheduled and you will be assessed a $500 rescheduling fee.
    - All examination sessions are recorded.

Distractions and Interruptions

As the exams are not taking place in the ABA Assessment Center in Raleigh, N.C., we anticipate that unexpected distractions and interruptions may occur during an exam. Distractions and interruptions include, but are not limited to, background noise that interferes with the ability to conduct the exam. The examiners, in consultation with ABA staff, will determine if the distraction or interruption can be handled or if the exam must be terminated. The latter consequence will be considered an interrupted test appointment. The reasons for the interrupted test appointment will be documented, and the candidate will be contacted by ABA staff to discuss retest options.

Additional Prep Materials

You should now have the logistical information you need to make the virtual exam process go as smoothly as possible. You can also review sample SOE and OSCE questions on our website at https://theaba.org

After the Exam

Approximately two days following the exam, you will be asked to complete an anonymous experience survey. Your feedback is important and will help the ABA enhance the experience for future candidates. Survey data will be managed by ABA personnel separate from those involved in the exam scoring, and responses will have no bearing on your result.

We know that you will be anxious to learn how you did. We will email a link to access your results in your portal account approximately six weeks after the exam.

If you have any questions, we're here to help. Contact us at APPLIEDexam@theaba.org or (866) 999-7501 Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. ET.

GOOD LUCK!

Appendices

Appendix A: Virtual APPLIED Exam Release

Please read the following Virtual APPLIED Exam Release and click the "I agree" button.

VIRTUAL APPLIED EXAM RELEASE

I consent to having the entirety of my virtual exam encounter recorded for quality assurance and training purposes. I agree that I have no rights to or ownership interest in the video or audio of my performance.

I understand that if I attempt to record, transmit or transcribe any portion of this examination, my exam will be invalidated, I will forfeit my registration fee, and I will be ineligible for ABA certification according to our Policy Book. The ABA will proactively employ measures to identify breaches of this agreement (e.g. publication of exam materials on-line, uploading of audio or video of examination sessions to discussion groups) and, in addition to ABA sanctions, will prosecute those responsible under any and all applicable state and federal laws, including copyright laws.

I agree not to seek assistance from other people (whether in-person or remote) or reference materials (books, pre-written notes, computer programs, online reference resources) during the exam and acknowledge my understanding that failure to comply with this stipulation will result in invalidation of my examination, forfeiture of your registration fee, and ineligibility for ABA certification according to our Policy Book.

I read, understood and signed the APPLIED Exam attestation shown below when I registered for the APPLIED Exam.

APPLIED Examination Attestation

I, the undersigned registrant ("registrant"), hereby agree to participate in the American Board of Anesthesiology, Inc.'s ("ABA") initial certification program. I acknowledge that participation is subject to the ABA rules and regulations, all of which may be amended from time to time without further notice.

In connection with my registration, I authorize all persons holding testimony, records, documents, opinions, information and data relevant to or pertaining to my professional competence and ethical conduct and/or behavior (the "Background Information") to release such Background Information to the ABA, its employees and agents. This authorization applies whether or not such persons are listed as a reference on my registration. The Background Information includes any information relating to any abusive use of alcohol and/or illegal use of drugs, and any medical or psychiatric treatment or rehabilitation related thereto. I understand that such Background Information may be

used to determine, verify or deny my qualifications for entrance into the ABA entrance examination and ABA certification. I understand that the ABA treats this information as confidential and will not release the content or a copy of any references to me unless the person providing the reference consents in writing. A copy of this release may accompany any request made by the ABA for such Background Information.

I authorize the ABA to: (1) report my status in the examination system, including the results of any examination, to the director and department chair of the program from which I received my clinical training; (2) use any score in psychometric analyses to confirm observations and reports of suspected irregularities in the conduct of an examination; and (3) respond to any inquiry about my status in the ABA examination system. I understand and agree that once my examination registration is completed and granted, this consent cannot be withdrawn.

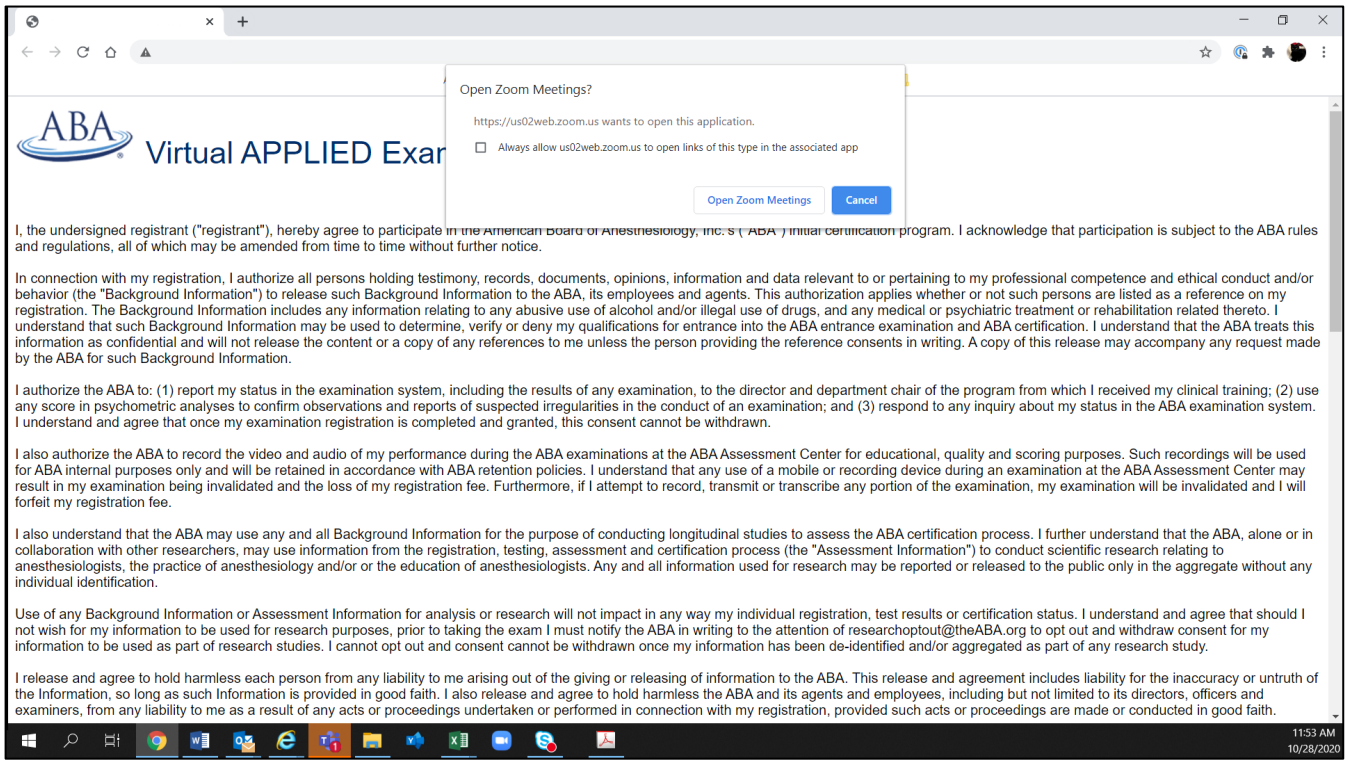
I also authorize the ABA to record the video and audio of my performance during the ABA examinations at the ABA Assessment Center for educational, quality and scoring purposes. Such recordings will be used for ABA internal purposes only and will be retained in accordance with ABA retention policies. I understand that any use of a mobile or recording device during an ABA examination may result in my examination being invalidated and the loss of my registration fee. Furthermore, if I attempt to record, transmit or transcribe any portion of the examination, my examination will be invalidated, and I will forfeit my registration fee.

I also understand that the ABA may use any and all Background Information for the purpose of conducting longitudinal studies to assess the ABA certification process. I further understand the ABA, alone or in collaboration with other researchers, may use information from the registration, testing, assessment and certification process (the "Assessment Information") to conduct scientific research relating to anesthesiologists, the practice of anesthesiology and/or or the education of anesthesiologists. Any and all information used for research may be reported or released to the public only in the aggregate without any individual identification.

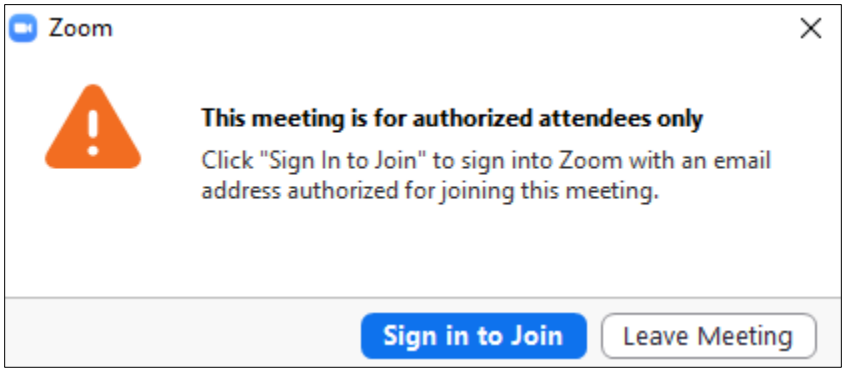
Use of any Background Information or Assessment Information for analysis or research will not impact in any way my individual registration, test results or certification status. I understand and agree that should I not wish for my information to be used for research purposes, prior to taking the exam I must notify the ABA in writing to the attention of researchoptout@theABA.org to opt out and withdraw consent for my information to be used as part of research studies. I cannot opt out and consent cannot be withdrawn once my information has been de-identified and/or aggregated as part of any research study.

APPENDIX B - VIRTUAL SOE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

On your exam day, you will log into your SOE using the link we emailed you up to one week earlier. After clicking on the link at the scheduled time, you will receive another link to access the exam registration room, and the APPLIED Exam attestation will appear on your screen. **Please keep this browser window open after you complete the attestation. Your exam stem will appear in this window.**



Click on the link to open the Zoom meeting, and you will be placed in the Zoom waiting room. If you see a dialog box that asks you to enter your Zoom login credentials, enter the user name and password for your exisiting account. *You may not see this dialog box, but please have this information readily available so you do not delay the registration process.*



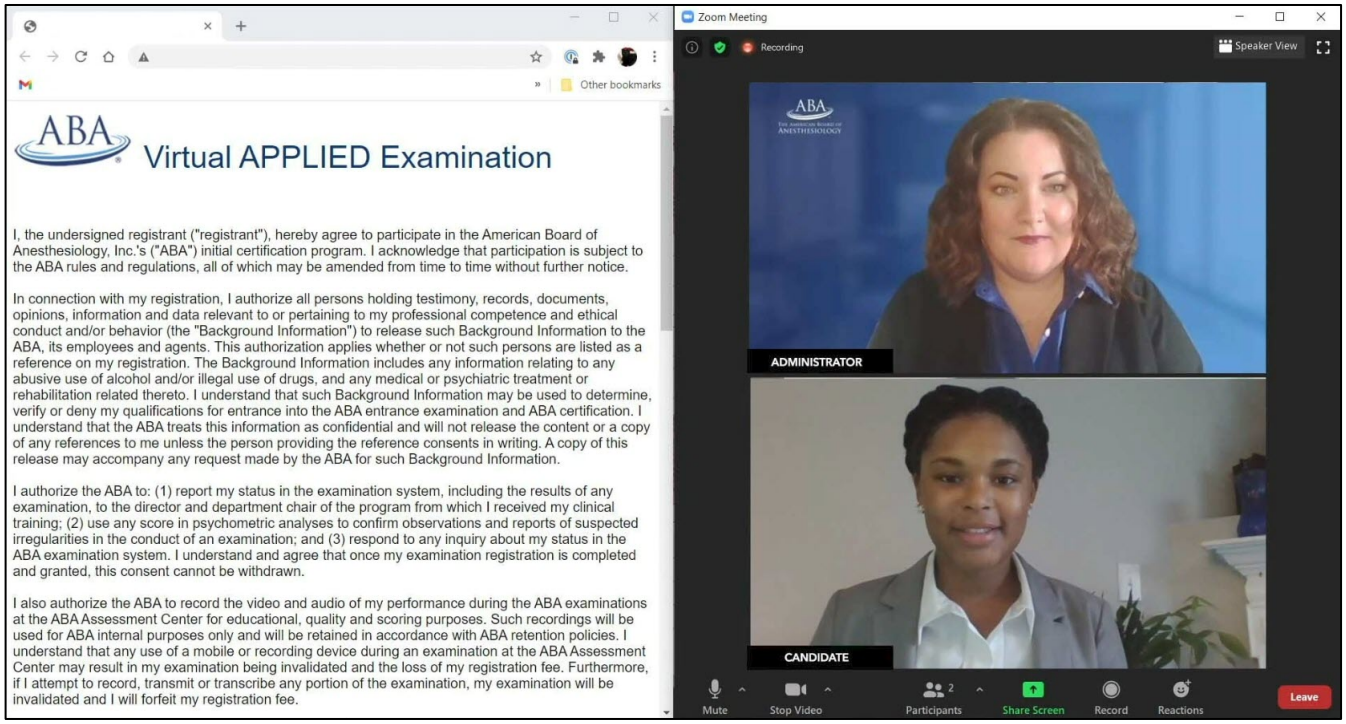
After arriving in the virtual waiting room, a welcome message will appear on your screen, signaling that the VAE administrator is aware that you have arrived and will be with you shortly. The administrator will admit one candidate at a time into a separate Zoom registration room to complete registration. **It may take up to 15 minutes to be admitted into the meeting.**

It is important that you initiate your audio as soon as you enter the waiting room. Click the Zoom audio button in the lower left of your screen, and select Join With Computer Audio. We recommend using the Test Speaker and Microphone feature first, to ensure your audio level and quality is sufficient for you to be heard clearly, though it is not required. You may prefer to use an external microphone during your exam, and if so, select it by clicking the arrow next to the Zoom audio button.



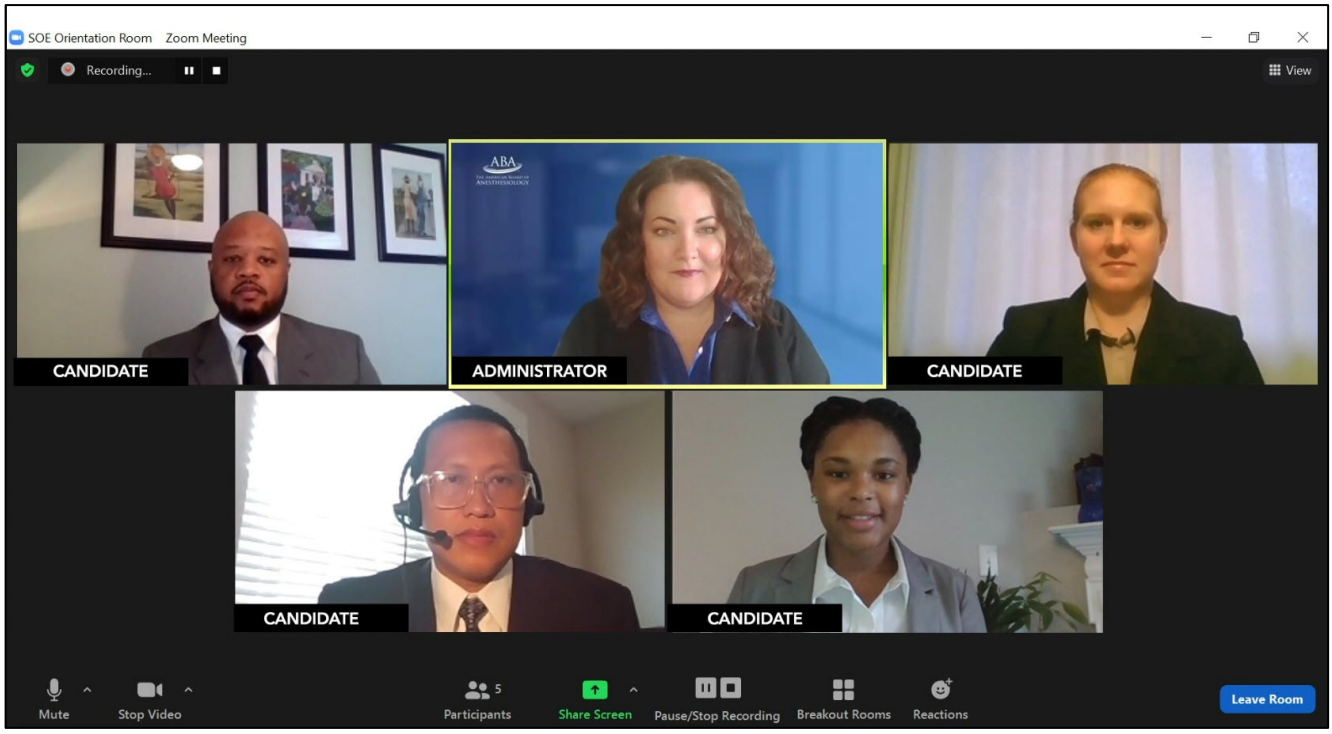
While you are in the Zoom waiting room, you must read and consent to the Virtual APPLIED Exam Release shown on your browser by clicking "I agree."

When you are admitted into the registration room, you may need to reposition the Zoom screen and window with your attestation so that they are vertical, side-by-side and not overlapping, as shown in the image below.

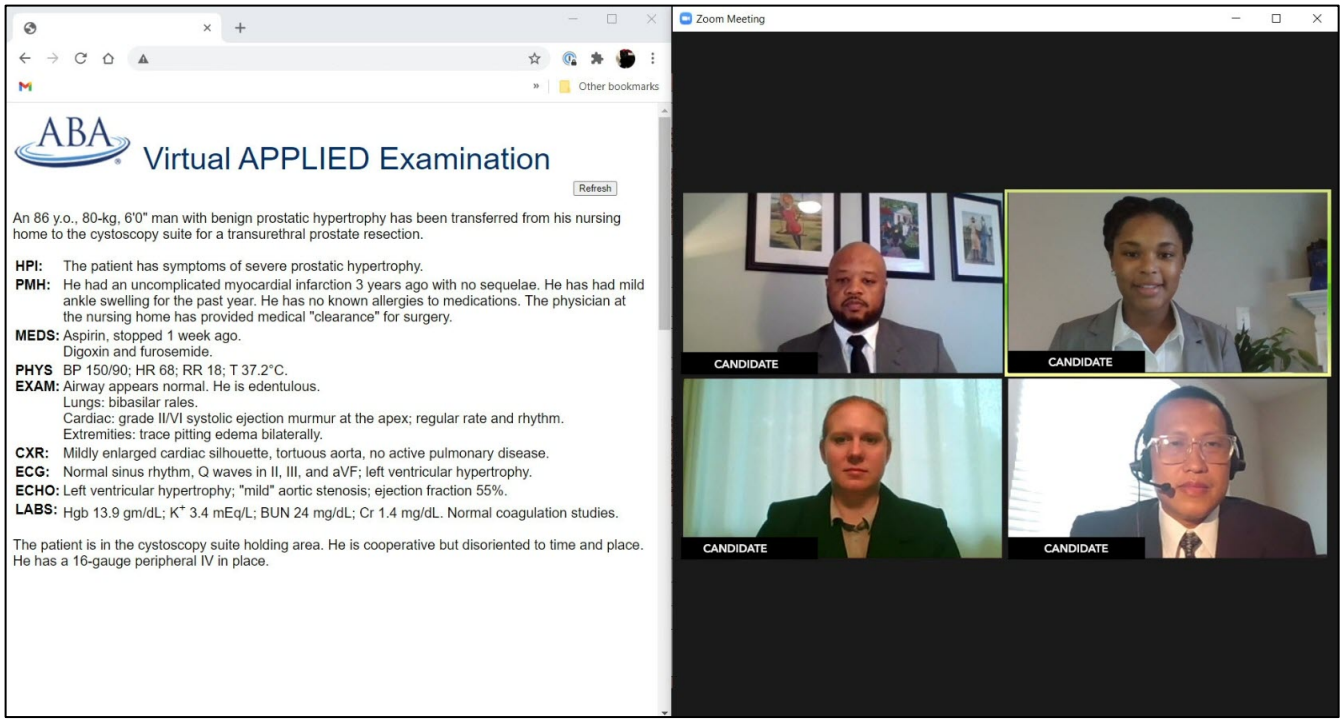


At this time, the administrator will ask you to present an unexpired, government-issued picture identification such as a driver's license or passport.

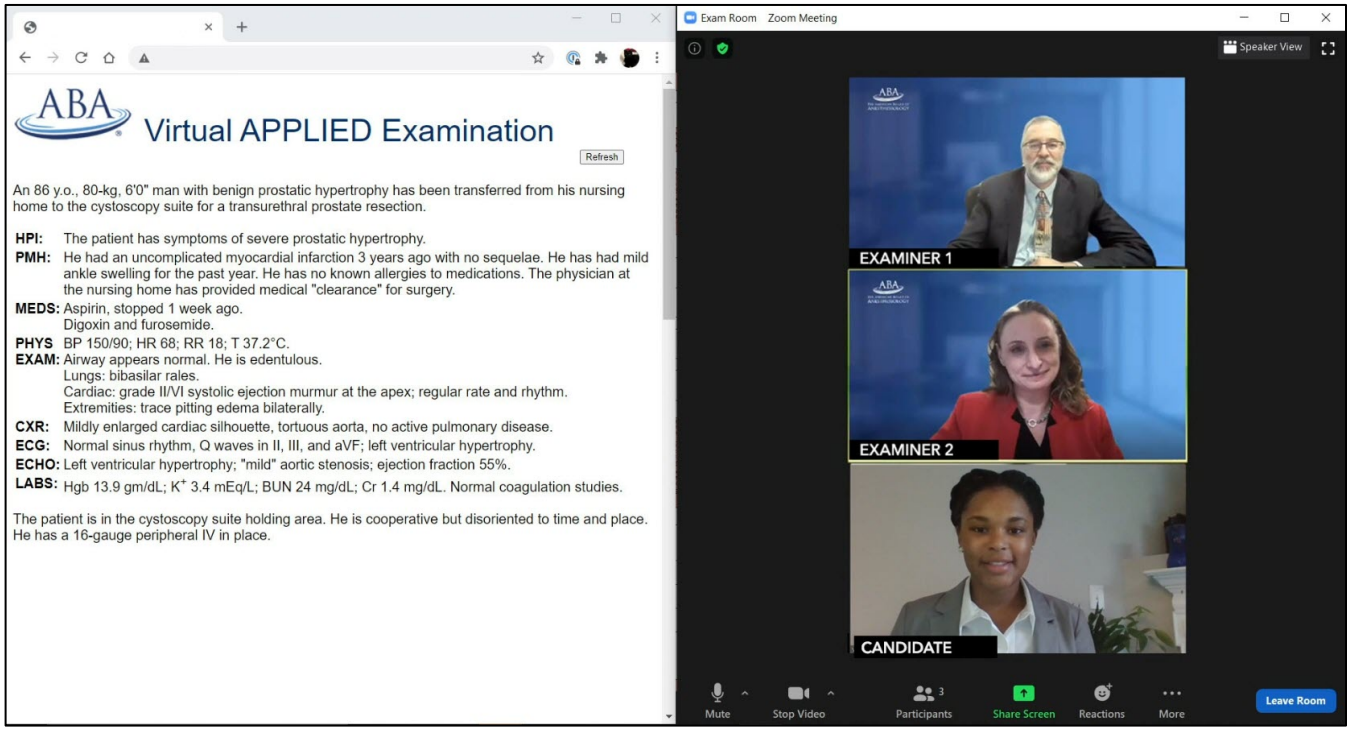
After registration, the administrator will move you to the SOE orientation room. Once all candidates have been placed in the room, you will receive a brief set of instructions. Please remain quiet during orientation, but do not mute your audio at any time.



Following the instructions, the first patient scenario (stem) will appear on your screen. You will have approximately 20 minutes to study the stem.

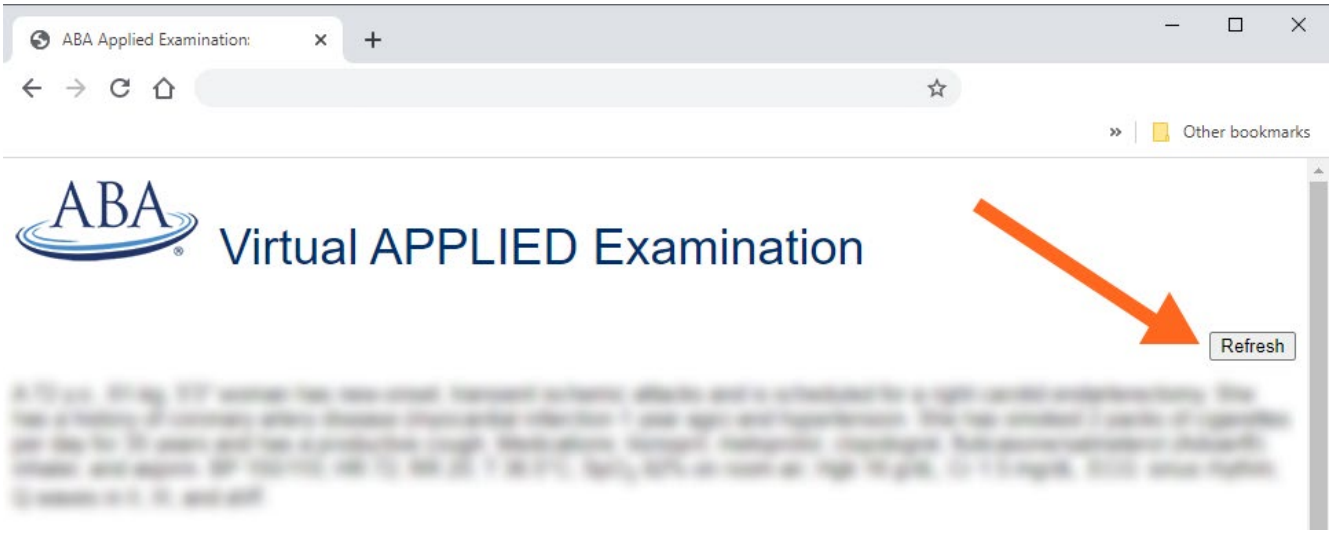


After the study period is completed, the administrator will individually move candidates into exam rooms. Once you are admitted, the two examiners will introduce themselves to you and confirm that you have the same stem. The first session will last 40 minutes.



Examiners will alert you with one minute remaining in the exam session. At the end of the session, you will be moved back to the orientation room and will see the exam stem for your second session. The material for the second session will appear as soon as your first exam ends.

If the stem does not automatically appear, use the Refresh button at the top of your screen. If, after clicking Refresh, you still cannot see the stem, check the orientation of your Zoom window/video screen.



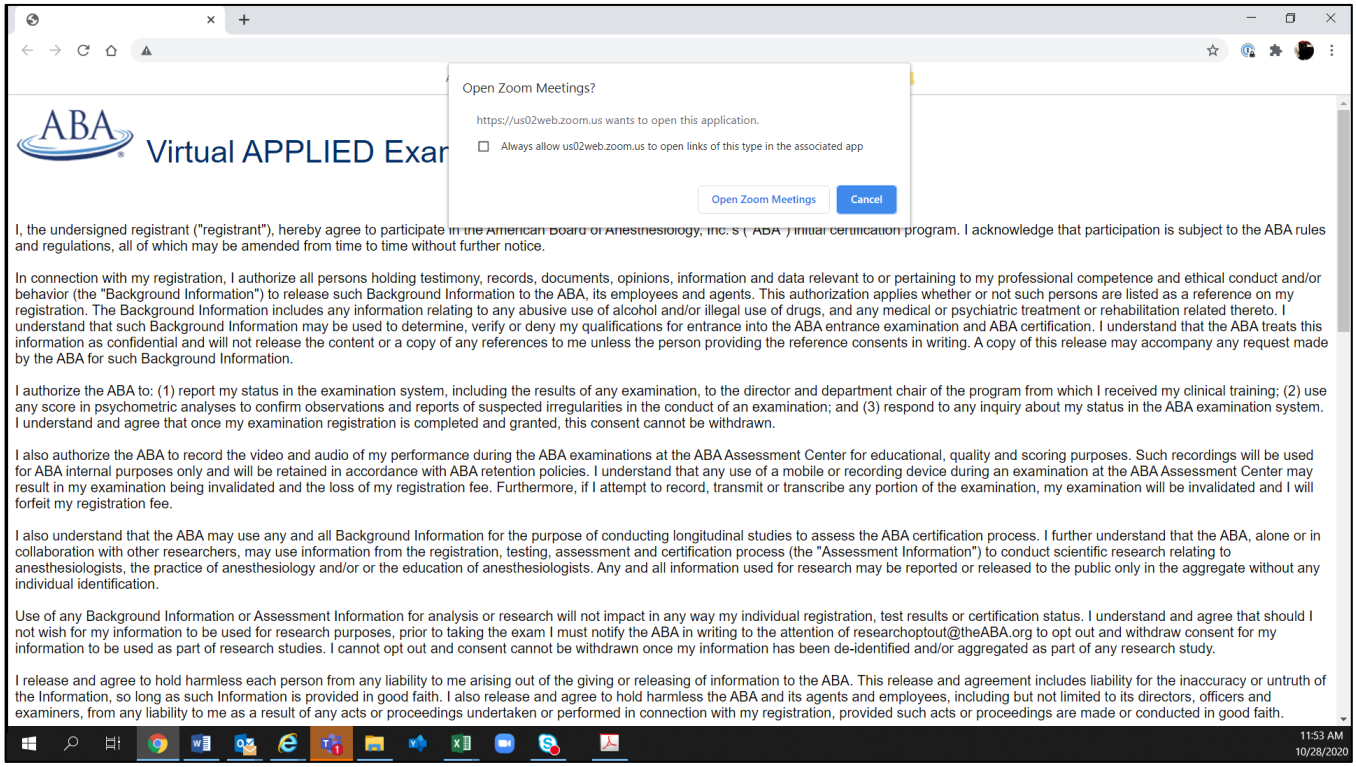
You will have approximately 10 minutes to prepare this second, shorter stem before being moved into the second virtual exam room.

At the conclusion of the second session, an administrator will move you back to the virtual orientation room. Your SOE is now over and the administrator will instruct you to leave the Zoom meeting at this time.

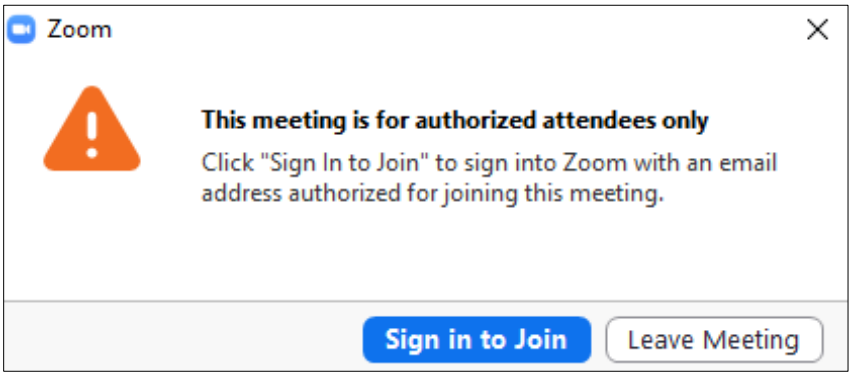
APPENDIX C - VIRTUAL OSCE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

The OSCE is an 84-minute exam with seven, eight-minute encounters preceded by four-minute study breaks for the Communications & Professionalism stations and three-minute study breaks for the Technical stations to review your next scenario. You will interact via Zoom with standardized patients or standardized clinicians in the Communications & Professionalism stations and non-physician exam facilitators in the Interpretation of Echocardiograms and Interpretation of Monitors stations.

You will log into your OSCE by clicking on the link in the email we sent you up to one week earlier. After clicking on the link at the scheduled time, you will receive another link to access the exam registration room, and the APPLIED Exam attestation will appear on your screen. Please keep this browser window open after you complete the attestation. Your OSCE scenarios will appear in this window.



Click on the link to open the Zoom meeting and you will be placed in the Zoom waiting room. If you see a dialog box that asks you to enter your Zoom login credentials, enter the user name and password for your exisiting account. *You may not see this dialog box, but please have this information readily available so you do not delay the registration process.*



After arriving in the virtual waiting room, a welcome message will appear on your screen, signaling that the VAE administrator is aware that you have arrived and will be with you shortly. The administrator will admit one candidate at a time into a separate Zoom registration room to complete registration. It may take up to 20 minutes to be admitted into the meeting.

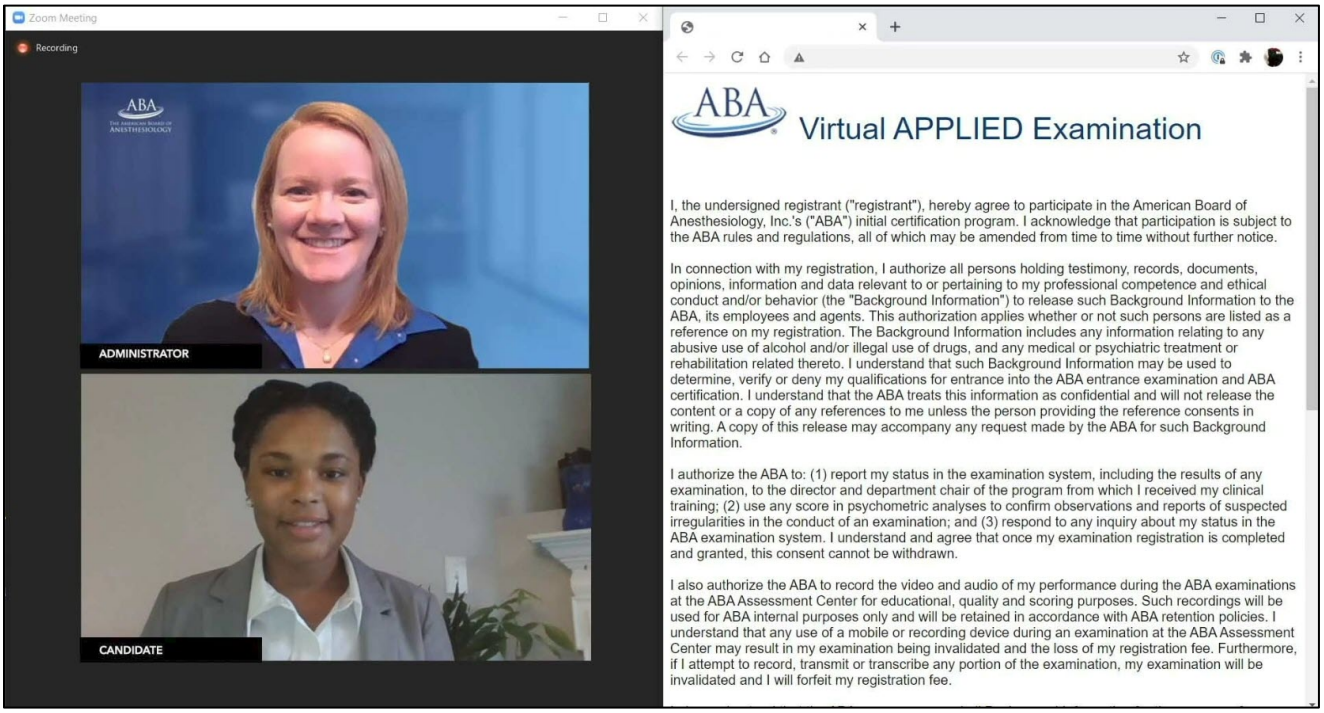
It is important that you initiate your audio as soon as you enter the waiting room. Click the Zoom audio button in the lower left of your screen, and select Join With Computer Audio.



We recommend using the Test Speaker and Microphone feature first, to ensure your audio level and quality is sufficient for you to be heard clearly, though it is not required. You may prefer to use an external microphone during your exam, and if so, select it by clicking the arrow next to the Zoom audio button.

While you are in the Zoom waiting room, you must read and consent to the Virtual APPLIED Exam Release shown on your browser by clicking “I agree.”

Once you are admitted to the OSCE registration room, you may need to reposition the Zoom screen and window with your attestation so that they are vertical and side-by-side. At this time, the administrator will ask you to present an unexpired, government-issued picture identification such as a driver’s license or passport.

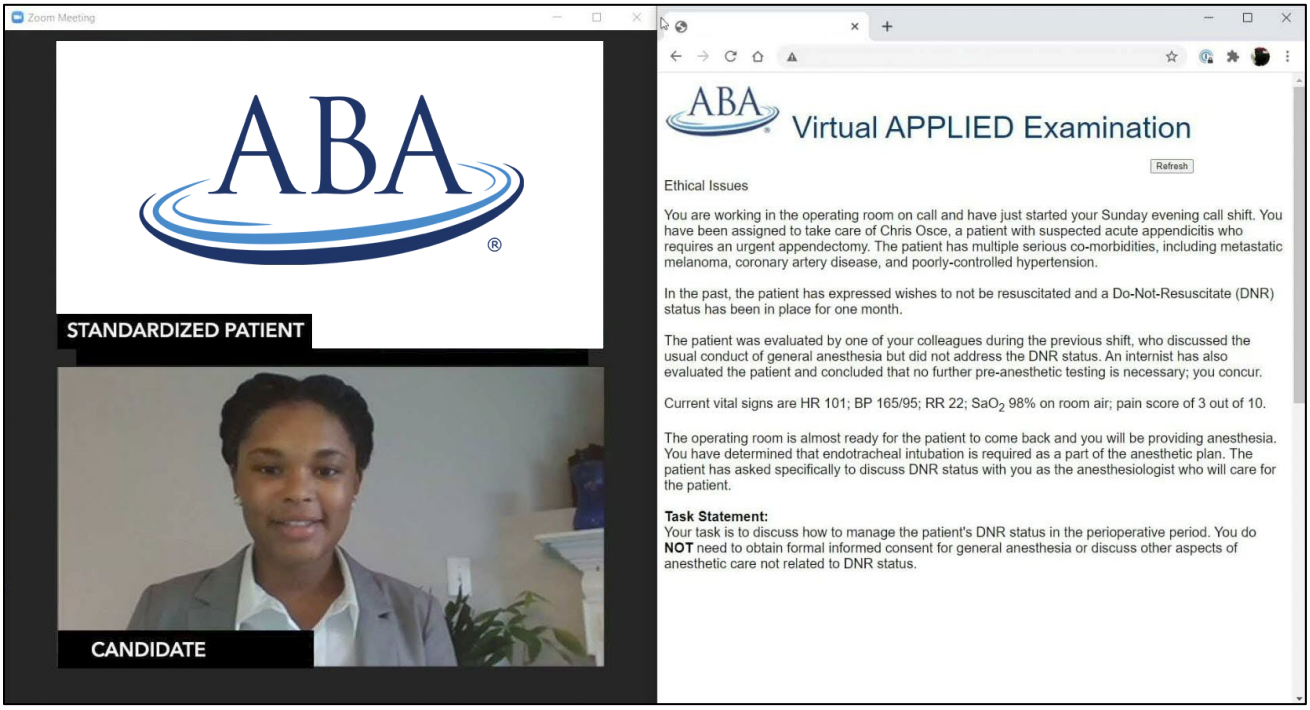


After registration, the administrator will move you to the OSCE orientation room. Once all candidates have been placed in the room, you will receive a brief set of instructions. Please remain quiet during orientation, but do not mute your audio at any time.

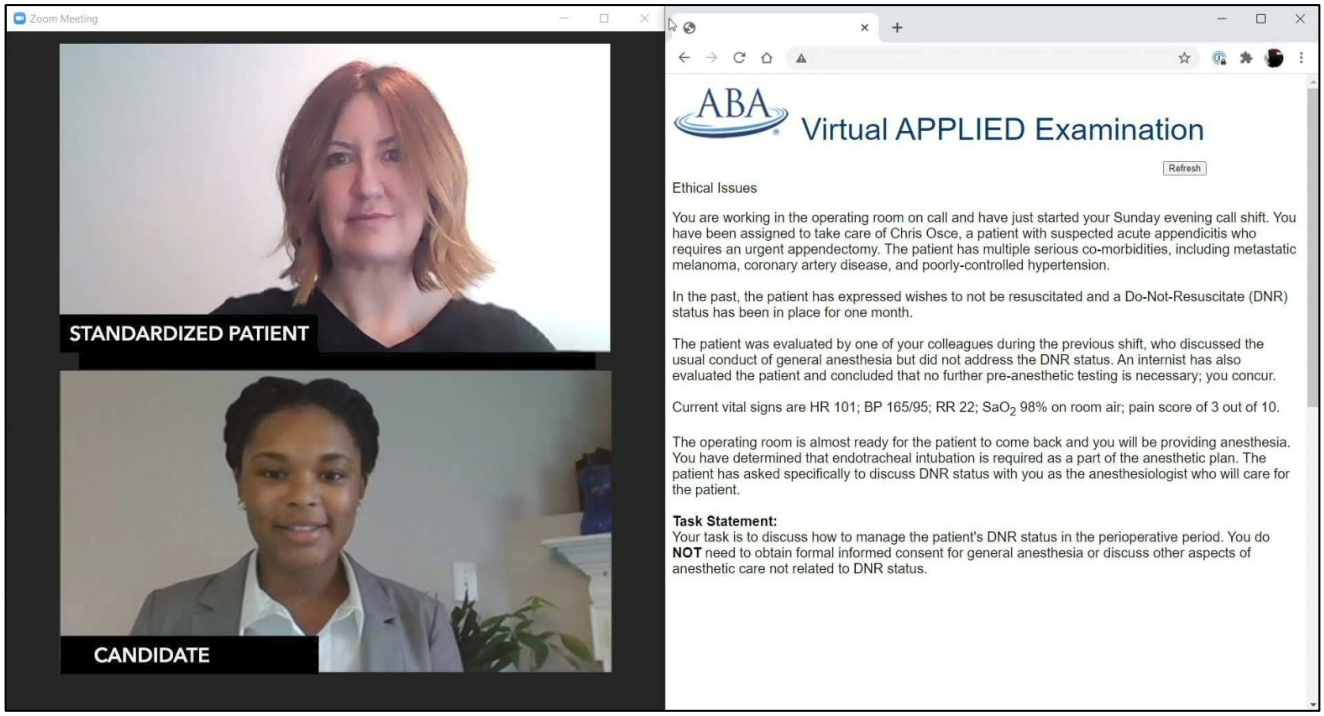


Following the instructions, the administrator will admit you into your exam room where you will remain for the duration of the exam. At the appropriate time, your first patient scenario will appear.

If at any time during the OSCE the information relating to the clinical scenario has not appeared in your browser window, click the Refresh button at the top of your screen as indicated on page 17.

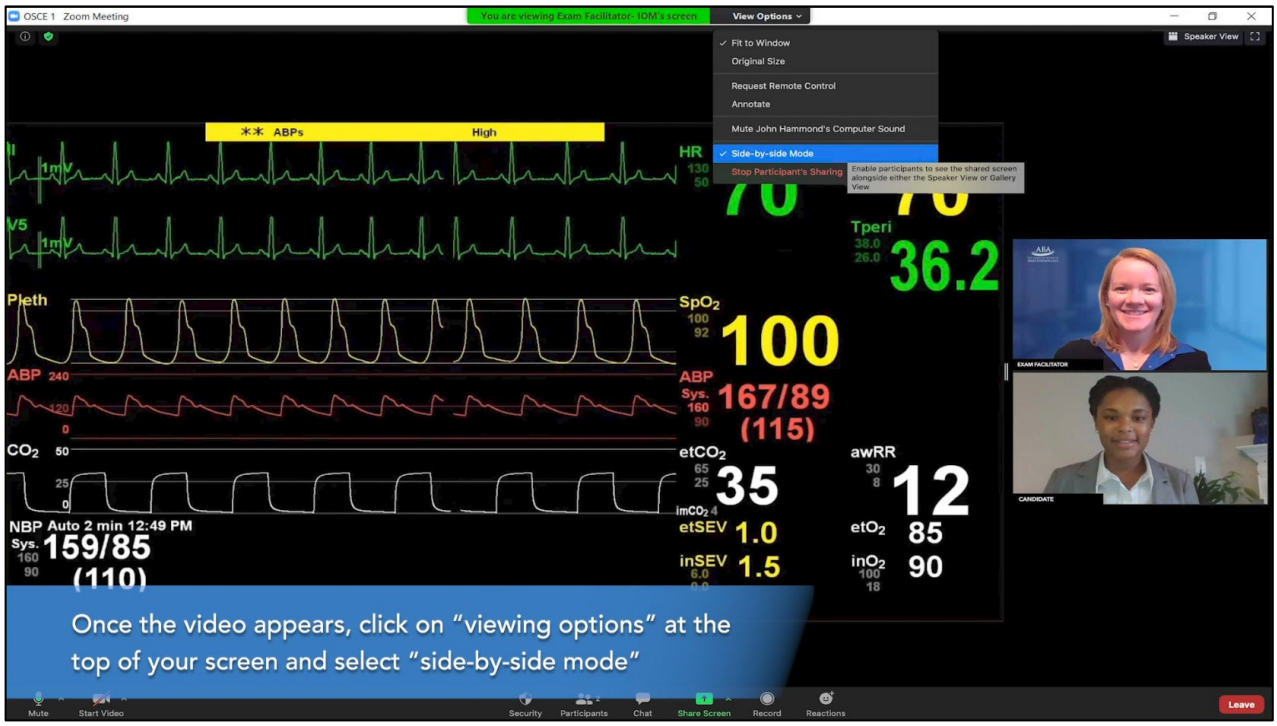


After the study period ends, the standardized patient, standardized clinician, or exam facilitator will appear on your screen, and the encounter will begin.



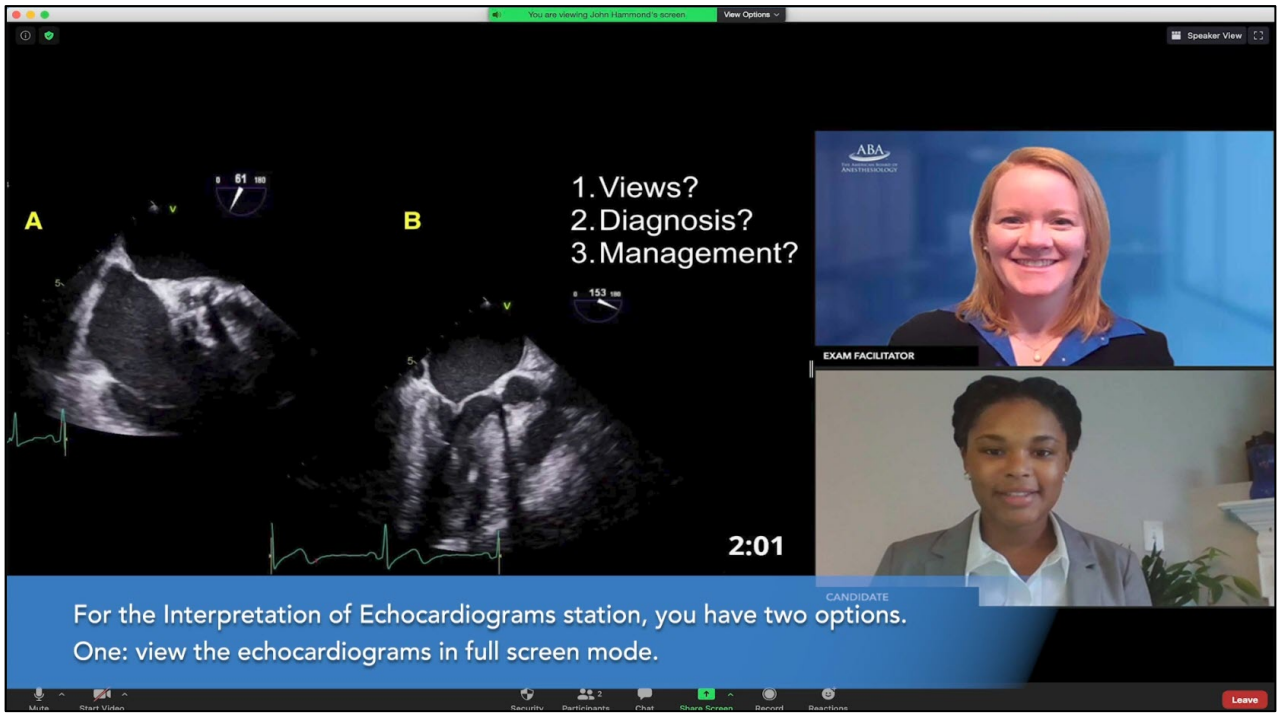
For the Interpretation of Monitors station, the exam facilitator will share the Monitors video and Zoom will display in full screen mode. After the video appears, you will also need to click "viewing options" at the top of your screen and select "side-by-side mode." The window should be returned to the previous setting after this station to ensure that the material for the next station can be seen in the web browser. For the Interpretation of Echocardiograms station, you may keep the Echocardiogram video maximized in Zoom after the exam facilitator shares the video or you can click “Esc” to view both the echocardiogram video on the Zoom platform and the echocardiogram view names in your browser.

Sample Interpretation of Monitors Exam Session

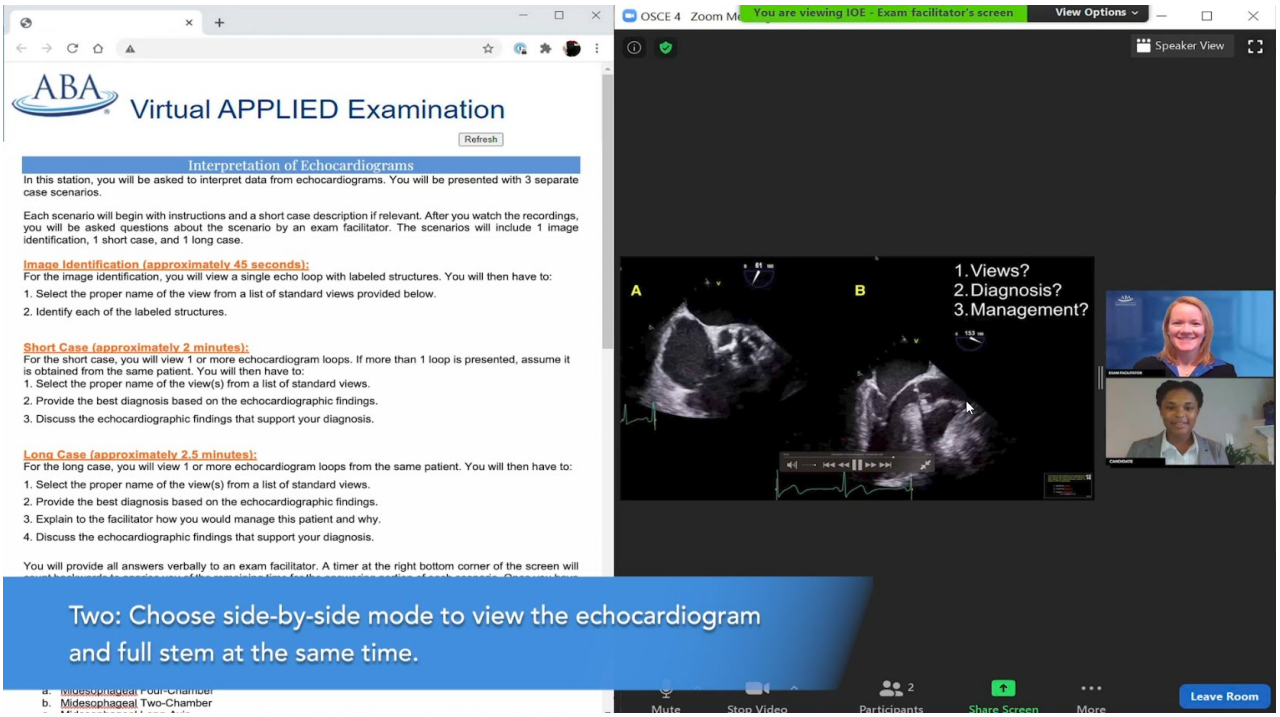


Sample Interpretation of Echocardiogram Exam Session

For the Interpretation of Echocardiogram station, the exam facilitator will share the screen in full screen mode as shown below.



If you prefer to view the screen in side-by-side mode as shown below, click "Esc."



A tone will sound two minutes before the end of the encounter, and at the end of the session. The standardized patient, standardized clinician or exam facilitator will leave the room, and the scenario for the next station will appear on your screen.

After the study period ends, the standardized patient, standardized clinician or exam facilitator will appear on your screen, and the encounter will begin.

You will be logged out of the Zoom meeting after you have completed all seven stations.

Appendix D: Candidate Checklist

