



Member Communiqué

Professional Standards Assessment Benchmark

April 2008

Dear Members and Colleagues:

The Council has recently approved a benchmark of 70% **OR** above the 6th percentile for the online, open-book Professional Standards Assessment (PSA). Consisting of 50 multiple-choice questions, the PSA supports the practice of Respiratory Therapy in the public interest by requiring Members to apply their knowledge of College legislation, regulations, standards and/or guidelines. Members who are randomly selected under the Quality Assurance Program are given 30 days in which to complete the PSA.

Each year the College receives calls and emails from Members who have been randomly selected or referred from another committee to the Quality Assurance Committee, and required to complete the PSA asking for clarification. For example:

“What’s a pass mark for the PSA?”

The College recently decided to set a benchmark for the PSA of 70% or the 6th percentile, whichever is lower in a given year. There are several reasons the College decided to do this:

- to ensure that Members are treated fairly and consistently from year to year;
- to ensure openness/transparency to the membership, the public, the Ministries and other government agencies;
- to provide consistent guidance to Panels of the Quality Assurance Committee and staff; and
- to ensure the CRTO complies with regulatory provisions.

“What happens if I don’t pass?”

Members who achieve a score of *less than 70%* or fall within the 6th percentile, whichever is lower, may be given the opportunity to re-write the PSA to try and improve their scores.

If, for some reason, a Member’s score on his/her second attempt still does not reach the benchmark, the Member may be asked to meet with staff who will mentor him/her on the key areas/topics tested in the PSA. The Member may be asked to re-write the PSA following this meeting.

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“What is the difference between the 6th percentile and getting a score of 65%?”

If your score at the 6th percentile, 94% of your peers achieved a higher score on the PSA. The 6th percentile is calculated each year following the completion of the PSA by the randomly selected group of Members.

The 6th percentile allows for variables in the mean score – for example one year the average score was 82% another 78%. The 6th percentile allows for an *unusually* high or low average score in a particular year, and ensures that Members do not have additional requirements placed on them unfairly.

Here is another way of looking at it:

- a) if all Members were to obtain a score greater than 70%, no one would be required to undergo remediation; or
- b) in the unlikely event that all Members obtain a score lower than 70%, only those within the 6th percentile may be required to undergo remediation.

“How did the College arrive at the benchmark?”

The College discussed the benchmark for “satisfactory” at length, as well as the process by which the score would be set. The CRTO sought the advice of legal counsel and other colleges that have similar assessment tools and spoke with a psychometric consultant regarding appropriate formulations.

While some other organizations formulate cut scores, the expert opinion we received was that this process would not be appropriate for a non-standardized test such as the PSA. The financial implications of determining a cut score on an annual basis also made this an unfavourable option.

In addition to conferring with legal counsel, other colleges and the psychometric consultant, the Quality Assurance Committee discussed the proposed benchmark with the RTSO.

The College would welcome any comments regarding this new policy. Please submit your remarks by Friday, May 30th, 2008.

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