Q&A Transcript for MCAT<sup>2015</sup> Q-UPP Webinar
Date: Tuesday, July 23, 2013

Q: Will the MCAT<sup>2015</sup> exam first be administered in April 2015?
A: We have not determined the new exam testing schedule. As we do for the current exam, the testing calendar will be made available in the Fall prior to the testing year. Once we do have that information, we will post it on our website and send announcements via e-mail and listservs.

Q: What grading/score scale will be used for the new MCAT?
A: We had originally projected the new score scales to be available in Fall 2014. We have been able to make significant progress with regard to the new score scale and expect to announce the new scale in the fourth quarter of 2013.

Q: When will the Official Guide for the new exam be available? When will sample tests be available?
A: The Official Guide for the MCAT Exam, Fourth Edition (2015 Exam) is projected to be available in January of 2014. A sample test is scheduled for Fall 2014. We are also working on other practice items.

Q: How do test takers practice identified weak cognitive skills? What resources exist to help practice?
A: Students who have identified where they are weak in the cognitive skills can use any of our future MCAT preparation products for the new exam to support focused study on improving the 4 scientific inquiry and reasoning skills and the 3 critical analysis and reasoning skills that will be tested on the new exam. The practice items in The Official Guide for the MCAT Exam, Fourth Edition (2015 Exam) that is coming out in January and the sample tests available later in 2014 will identify all the items that fall into these 7 categories, allowing students to focus on these items and use them in review and see how they performed, allowing them to compare what led them to the incorrect answer. With regard to the mastery of the content on the exam, the AAMC doesn’t endorse any recommended learning resources, however many resources like the future Khan Academy video tutorials will be available in the Pre-health Collection within MedEdPORTAL’s iCollaborative.

Q: Will the scores from the current version of the MCAT exam be accepted for some transitional period?
A: We will continue to report current exam scores through the 2019 application cycle. We suggest you consult the Medical School Admissions Requirements, also known as MSAR, as each school determines how long they will accept scores. The MSAR will continue to publish the latest and oldest accepted scores by school and will collate them into a report on the MSAR Advisor’s website.
Any MCAT scores for tests taken from 1991 to the present can be accessed through the THx system. If a score prior to 1991 is needed, you can submit a Paper Score Report Request to the MCAT office.

Q: Are A.P. Psychology and Sociology acceptable as preparation for the new section or should we advise our students to take college courses in Psychology and Sociology?

A: The MCAT staff reviewed the content for advanced placement Psychology courses recommended by the College Board – and with the understanding that there’s a little variability across high schools in how they teach the content. Of the 14 concepts actually tested by the AP Psychology Exam, a number of those concepts will be tested on the MCAT exam as well, including biological basis of behavior, motivation and emotion, and social psychology, to name a few.

There is no AP Sociology offering at the present time.

For those that are looking for resources in this area, we do have the new Sociology and Psychology Textbook Resource available, where publishers have indicated where the Foundational Concepts on the MCAT exam are covered in their textbooks for introductory college-level courses. And through our collaboration with the Khan Academy, there will be video tutorial resources for psychology and sociology concepts as well.

Q: What courses should examinees have had before taking the MCAT exam?

A: There are no prerequisites for the MCAT exam, but if you take a look at the Preview Guide to the MCAT Exam (Second Edition) that is available in PDF format online, it will give you a good idea of the content categories that students will need to be familiar with (pages 11-17). Once The Official Guide to the MCAT Exam, Fourth Edition (2015 Exam) comes out in January, that will also be very helpful for preparing for the new MCAT exam.

Q: Will students receive scaled scores for sample (practice) exams?

A: We are able to give scaled scores for the current MCAT practice tests because those items are retired from the actual MCAT exam. We won’t be in that situation for our first MCAT sample test for a while, so as soon as we have retired items from the new MCAT exam for a practice test, we will be able to resume scoring them with an estimated scaled score.

Q: Can we get help identifying the courses at our institutions that cover the essential skills on the MCAT exam?

A: We’ve provided The Course-Mapping Tool for the MCAT Exam, which helps you take a look at the courses that your institution offers and mapping that to the content that’s going to be on the new exam. There is also a video tutorial on how to use The Course-Mapping Tool.

Q: What have we learned so far from the Trial Section data about students’ ability to respond to psychology and sociology content questions without having courses in those areas?
A: We are currently working on that data now. We are just about halfway through the testing year collecting data and so we are not at a point yet where we can make conclusions about the Trial Section data. We are still in the data analysis mode.

Q: Why are the natural sciences passages excluded from the critical analysis and reasoning skills portion of the new test?

A: That has been done to promote a healthy balance on the exam. There are two test sections covering the natural sciences and we have a section in the social and behavioral sciences complemented by our critical analysis and reasoning skills. The interest there was well-roundedness on the exam and balance.

Q: Can students use AP credit for psychology?

A: We don’t know if they can use AP credit. With regard to the coursework, what we do know is that the College Board and the AP Psychology Exam test 14 concepts and a number of those concepts are also tested on the new MCAT2015 exam, although we don’t have detailed knowledge of the content of the AP Psychology Exam. While some of the content is similar, it may an AP course in psychology may be helpful. We also have the introductory Sociology and Psychology Textbook Resource available, in which publishers have indicated where the Foundational Concepts and Content Categories on the new exam are covered in their textbooks.

Q: Will the research methods of the PSBB validity study be released after they are finalized?

A: Yes, they will. We are in the process of working with the medical schools involved in the study to help us look at the validity of the new PSBB section of the exam in relationship to performance in medical school classes that teach behavioral and social sciences content. Once we have the data from the study, we will report both the methods by which we collected the data and analyzed the data, as well as the results.

Q: If a student took cell biology in college, would they still need biochemistry?

A: That would probably require an evaluation of the curriculum in the cell biology class with the content lists that appear in the Preview Guide for the MCAT2015 Exam (Second Edition). If there is a match there and the concepts are covered, then it is likely that the student would be prepared. An outline of the Foundational Concepts and content categories for each of the four test sections can be found on pages 11-17 of the Preview Guide, with more detailed lists an sample test questions on pages 22-151.

Q: Regarding The Course-Mapping Tool, does it contain a list of topics that should be covered in courses to prepare students for the MCAT2015 exam? Although there are content categories listed, how will student themselves be able to determine which combination of courses will provide them with that content?

A: The Course-Mapping Tool for the MCAT2015 Exam (an excel spreadsheet) supports pre-health advisors in the transition to the new exam by putting the MCAT2015 content and skills in an Excel spreadsheet. This allows advisors to identify the
course levels from which the content is drawn, filter content by course level, and map their course content to MCAT2015 content. What we have heard is that advisors are reaching out to the faculty and asking them to help create that mapping tool specific to their institution. With regard to the students, our hope is that each individual institution will fill out their own course-mapping tool and share that information with all faculty and students. View the video tutorial for additional information on how to use the Tool.

Q: Will any of the questions require the use of calculus?

A: No.

Q: Will more test dates be available in 2014? Is there the possibility that testing dates will be available throughout 2014?

A: We haven’t finalized the actual 2014 exam schedule yet. We will be announcing the schedule this Fall on our website, and via e-mails and listservs.

Q: Has the order of the exam been finalized?

A: We have not finalized the order of the exam. Our expectation is that it will proceed with the Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems section first, then the Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills section, then the Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems, and finally the Psychological, Social and Biological Foundations of Behavior section.

Q: Which section will cover physics?

A: Physics will be covered in the Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems section.

Q: Is there a written component of the MCAT2015 exam?

A: There is no written component of the new exam.

Q: Do you expect to release any preliminary feedback about the Trial Section data and what it means about current students’ ability to handle the new content?

A: We are still working through that analysis, so it’s still too early to say what the reports will be.
Q: Do we have any idea when the new exam will start on a given test day?

A: We don’t have the actual schedule yet. As has been noted, the exam will be longer and that is indicated in the Preview Guide to the MCAT2015 Exam (Second Edition) (page 8). We haven’t determined the schedule for the actual days we will be administering the test nor the start time. We are investigating all of the options available to us with our testing facilities.

Q: Can you clarify the meaning of “statistical reasoning”?

A: We would reference the description of the scientific inquiry and reasoning skills (SIRS) in the Preview Guide to the MCAT2015 Exam (Second Edition). The statistical concepts are those that were rated as helpful or important in introductory science labs. It’s not the case that a separate statistical course would be necessary, it’s those statistical concepts that are part of your laboratory science experience. These are specific to SIRS 3: Reasoning about the Design and Execution of Research (page 16) and SIRS 4: Data-based and Statistical Reasoning (page 17 of the Preview Guide).

Q: Do you have the date and time for the next webinar?

A: We plan to have the next webinar in early- to mid-October, however the date has not yet been determined. We plan to stay with the 3:00pm – 4:00pm eastern timeframe, which works for all time zones.

Q: Are commercial test preparation entities like Kaplan and Princeton Review going to be offering prep courses?

A: Commercial test prep companies will most likely continue to offer prep courses, but we do not have information on any specific courses.

Q: Approximately how many resources are ultimately expected out of the Khan Academy collaboration?

A: The Khan Academy has been looking through the Preview Guide to the MCAT2015 Exam and how they might sequence the content into videos. If you are familiar with the Khan Academy content, you know that the videos are usually pretty short – 5 to 15 minutes at the most. As they go through the content and the development process, while they do not have an exact number, it could be as high as 1,000 or more.

Q: Will there be a limited number of times the MCAT exam can be taken in a lifetime?

A: Yes, there probably will be, although we have not set any annual or lifetime limits for the new exam as of yet. As there are on the current exam, there will be limits.

Q: Can we get our students’ collective scores from the Trial Section?

A: The scores are only shared with the examinee, and only so they can compare how well they did with others who opted into the Trial Section. The Trial Section scores are not shared with advisors or medical school admissions officers.
Q: Will Prometric still be the vendor for the test? Will the extended length of the test interfere at all with the test schedule?

A: Prometric will continue to administer the MCAT exam. The longer test day will not interfere with the schedule of testing.

Q: Will the Psychology and Sociology Textbook resource include any psychology texts; it currently only appears to have Sociology?

A: Yes, when we reached out to the publishers, we reached out to both psychology and sociology publishers. We have not heard back from any of the psychology publishers. We have gone back out to them to show them the resource that has been created and encourage them to participate. If you have resources or know of a textbook that you think would make for a good reference point for this resource, please let us know about it at mcat2015@aamc.org. We will then reach out to the publisher with a specific request that faculty have asked that your book be included. We will continue to reach out to publishers and ask them to add their publication to our resource.

Q: Are there any expected changes to the CBT functionality? Highlighting, strike-through, note-taking, etc.?

A: We are working on some possible changes to the functionality. We don’t know yet which changes students have asked for that will be implemented for the new exam, but we are definitely working on it.

Q: Do you anticipate that students from different institutions will have taken different kinds of courses in the behavioral sciences and can still all perform equally?

A: The content tested in the PBSS section of the new exam lays the foundation for learning in medical school about the behavioral and sociocultural determinants of health and health outcomes. At many colleges and universities, this content is taught in introductory psychology and introductory sociology courses.

With regard to the PSBB section on the new test, the topics come from the three most heavily used college-level textbooks in introductory psychology and the three most heavily used college-level textbooks in introductory sociology.

The AAMC continues to explore how it can help medical schools select candidates that demonstrate the personal and professional characteristics that are desirable in physicians through the work of the Admissions Initiative. For more information about this work, please visit: www.aamc.org/ai

Q: Do you anticipate that students will be able to walk out with the unofficial test score since there isn’t a writing sample?

A: No, we do not expect that. We anticipate there will be a time between when they take the exam and when their test scores are provided to them.
Q: How many times will the new MCAT be given in a year?

A: The calendar for the new MCAT exam administration has not yet been determined, however administration will begin in Spring 2015. We plan to make the calendar available in the Fall of 2014. It will be promoted via our website, e-mail message and listserv announcements.

Q: Are students who take the Trial Section only given questions from subjects they are familiar with?

A: When students register to take the exam, they are asked about courses they have taken. Based on the answers provided during MCAT registration about the courses taken, and whenever possible, the AAMC will assign questions from courses you’ve already completed. Those who opt in for the Trial Section will test out 32 new questions in either: biochemistry, biology, chemistry, and physics or in psychology, sociology and biology.

Q: Our biology major requires either cell biology or microbiology. Which course would be better for them to take to prepare for the MCAT and medical school?

A: Curriculum at each institution will vary, as do admissions requirements/pre-requisites for medical school. For the MCAT, we suggest that you consult the Preview Guide for the MCAT Exam (Second Edition) and review the foundational concepts along with the content categories for Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems (Chapter 4) and Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems (Chapter 5) to see where these match up to your school’s curriculum.