

2026

Assessment of Clinical Judgement (ACJ®) Protocol

Effective January 19, 2026



© The National Dental Examining Board of Canada 2010

The National Dental Examining Board of Canada™ (NDEB®), and all other trademarks, examination names, and associated designs or logos, wherever they appear by or about the NDEB, whether or not appearing with the ® or ™ symbol, are protected as trademarks, service marks or trade names of the NDEB and any unauthorized use is expressly prohibited.

Contents

Purpose of the Assessment of Clinical Judgement (ACJ).....	4
Check-in	4
Additional Check-in Information for Prometric Test Centres.....	4
Content	5
Diagnosis, Treatment Planning and Clinical Decision Making.....	5
Radiographic Interpretation	5
Blueprint.....	5
Format	6
Sample Questions.....	6
Single-Answer Multiple-Choice Questions	6
Multiple-Answer Multiple-Choice Questions	6
Case History.....	8
Periodontal Chart	9
Important Definitions.....	11
Preparation Materials	12
Exam Orientation	12
ACJ Sample Questions and Answers.....	12
Reference Texts	12
Tooth Numbering System	12
Training Courses.....	13
Copyright and Exam Security	13
Examination Day Regulations	14
Test Accommodations	15
Exceptional Circumstances: Withdrawals, Compassionate Appeals, and Appeal of the Conduct of the Examination	15
Withdrawals.....	15
Compassionate Appeals	15

<i>Appeal of the Conduct of an Examination</i>	15
Results	16
Passing Standard	16
Appeals and Rescoring	16
Repeats	16



Purpose of the Assessment of Clinical Judgement (ACJ)

The purpose of the ACJ is to assess your ability to formulate a diagnosis, make clinical decisions, and to evaluate your knowledge in oral radiology, including your ability to make a radiographic interpretation and diagnosis.

Check-in

During check-in, you must show current government-issued photo identification. Acceptable forms of government-issued photo identification are:

- driver's licence,
- passport, or
- provincial photo identification card.

The ID must be in English or French. Photocopies and digital images will not be accepted.

Photo identification must show your name exactly as it appears in your online profile and must not be expired. If the photo identification does not have an expiry date, it must have been issued within the last 10 years.

If you do not provide government-issued photo identification, you will not be permitted to take the examination.

During check-in, staff may inspect eyeglasses, jewellery, and other accessories. This may require physical inspection and it may occur each time you enter the examination room.

You are advised to refrain from wearing jewellery, except wedding rings. Any other jewellery, including ornate hair accessories, will need to be removed and placed in a designated area.

Please refer to the Examination Day Regulations for information on what you can and cannot bring into the examination room.

Additional Check-in Information for Prometric Test Centres

During check-in at Prometric sites, you may be scanned with a metal detector wand, fingerprinted, required to raise your pant legs above your ankles, empty and turn all pockets inside-out, and raise shirt sleeves above your wrists prior to entry into the test room.

Prior to the examination, you must read [Prometric's test centre policies](#) including arrival and check-in procedures. These procedures may change at any time. It is your responsibility to know the test centre policies prior to your examination. If you do not comply with Prometric's policies, you may be refused access to the test centre.

Content

Examination items are developed based on the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) for a beginning dental practitioner available in the [Exam Resources](#) section of the NDEB website.

Each section of the ACJ will contain case-based diagnosis, treatment planning and clinical decision-making questions, and radiographic interpretation questions.

Diagnosis, Treatment Planning and Clinical Decision Making

Questions will evaluate your ability to formulate a diagnosis and to make clinical decisions. Case histories, dental charts and relevant images including radiographic images may be provided.

Radiographic Interpretation

Questions will evaluate your ability to prescribe, assess, interpret, and establish diagnoses from radiographic images.

Blueprint

The blueprint below shows the content areas and approximate percentage of questions in each area.

ACJ Blueprint	Percentage of Questions
Oral Medicine/Oral Pathology, Oral Surgery	25 ± 5
Pharmacotherapeutics, Medically-Complex Patients, Medical Emergencies, Geriatrics, Local Anesthesia	22 ± 5
Cariology/Restorative Dentistry	18 ± 5
Periodontics	15 ± 5
Endodontics	10 ± 5
Orthodontics, Pediatric Dentistry	10 ± 5
Total	100

Format

The ACJ is a computer-based examination consisting of approximately 150 single and multiple-answer multiple-choice questions. The examination is five hours in duration with one scheduled break.

Sample Questions

Sample questions below illustrate the formats generally used in the ACJ.

Single-Answer Multiple-Choice Questions

Some questions have one correct answer, indicated by the direction "Select **ONE** correct answer". Select the answer that is most likely to be correct.

Select **ONE** correct answer.

Which of the following is the most likely diagnosis for the entity shown in the photograph?

- Pyogenic granuloma.
- Hemangioma.
- Edema.
- Hematoma.
- Gingival cyst.
- Exostosis.
- Periodontal abscess.
- Acute apical abscess.
- Chronic apical abscess.

Multiple-Answer Multiple-Choice Questions

Some questions are identified by the direction "Select **ONE OR MORE** correct answers". These questions can have one correct answer or multiple correct answers. For ease of reading, the plural formulation is used for all questions which can have ONE OR MORE correct answers.

The grade you receive for each question depends on if you select all the correct answers, some of the correct answers, or an incorrect answer.

All questions have a maximum score of 1 and a minimum score of 0. Every answer in a multi-answer multiple-choice question has a value. You must select all the correct answers to receive a score of 1. If you select an incorrect answer, it does not matter if all your other answers are correct, you receive a score of 0.

Rarely, some answers may be given a value of "0" if they are neither definitively correct nor incorrect. Selecting one of these answers will not affect your score.

The example below shows the responses of three different candidates and their respective score for each question based on their answers.

Candidate 1

Select **ONE OR MORE** correct answers.

There is radiographic evidence of caries on which of the following surfaces?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.3. | -1 |
| ☐ | Mesial of tooth 2.4. | -1 |
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.4. | -1 |
| ☒ | Mesial of tooth 2.5. | .33 |
| ☒ | Distal of tooth 2.5. | .33 |
| ☒ | Mesial of tooth 2.6. | .34 |
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.6. | -1 |
| ☐ | Mesial of tooth 2.7. | 0 |
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.7. | -1 |
| ☐ | Mesial of tooth 2.8. | -1 |
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.8 . | -1 |

Total mark: 1

Candidate 1 has selected the three correct answers for a total of 1 mark.

Candidate 2

Select **ONE OR MORE** correct answers.

There is radiographic evidence of caries on which of the following surfaces?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-----|
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.3. | -1 |
| ☐ | Mesial of tooth 2.4. | -1 |
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.4. | -1 |
| ☒ | Mesial of tooth 2.5. | .33 |
| ☒ | Distal of tooth 2.5. | .33 |
| ☐ | Mesial of tooth 2.6. | .34 |
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.6. | -1 |
| ☒ | Mesial of tooth 2.7. | 0 |
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.7. | -1 |
| ☐ | Mesial of tooth 2.8. | -1 |
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.8. | -1 |

Total mark: .66

Candidate 2 has selected two correct answers and a zero-value answer. They have not selected all the correct answers, so part marks are given for the question.

Candidate 3

Select **ONE OR MORE** correct answers.

There is radiographic evidence of caries on which of the following surfaces?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-----|
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.3. | -1 |
| ☐ | Mesial of tooth 2.4. | -1 |
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.4. | -1 |
| ☒ | Mesial of tooth 2.5. | .33 |
| ☒ | Distal of tooth 2.5. | .33 |
| ☒ | Mesial of tooth 2.6. | .34 |
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.6. | -1 |
| ☐ | Mesial of tooth 2.7. | 0 |
| ☒ | Distal of tooth 2.7. | -1 |
| ☐ | Mesial of tooth 2.8. | -1 |
| ☐ | Distal of tooth 2.8. | -1 |

Total mark: 0

Candidate 3 has selected four answers. Three of the answers have a positive value but one has a value of -1. The candidate gets a total mark of 0.

Case History

Many questions include patient case histories in the format illustrated below.

Patient Information:			
Jane Doe 123 Main Street Ottawa, Ontario			
Age:	57	Blood Pressure:	130/86 mmHg
Sex:	Female	Heart Rate:	80 bpm
Height:	167 cm	Respiration Rate:	15/min
Weight:	60 kg	Temperature:	37°C
Chief Complaint:		"My front tooth hurts."	
History of Chief Complaint:		Noticed pain for the last 3 days.	
Dental History:		Irregular dental visits.	
Medical History:			
Significant Findings:		None.	
Current Medication:		None.	
Allergies:		None.	
Social/Family History:			
Significant Findings:		None.	
Clinical Examination:			
Significant Findings:			
Extraoral:		None.	
Intraoral:		See additional information as required.	

Periodontal Chart

Each periodontal chart will utilize the following notations:

- The upper part of the chart denotes the findings on the vestibular (buccal and/or labial) surfaces of the teeth being discussed for the case.
- Missing teeth are denoted by greyed out sections and a dash "-".
- Implants will be identified in the chart.
- Probing depths, in millimetres, are listed in the next row below the tooth number.
- Recession is listed below the probing depths, in millimetres. If there is no number, there is no significant recession.
- Bleeding on probing is denoted by "•" and is listed directly below the pocket where bleeding was found.
- The middle part of the chart denotes the findings for the lingual surfaces, using the same categories as above.
- Mobility and furcation involvement apply to the entire tooth and can be found on the bottom part of the chart.
- Mobility for the tooth, if present, is listed as a "1, 2, or 3", using the Miller classification.
- The Class (I, II, III) of furcation involvement (if present) is listed with the surface indicated (B, L, M, D).

The following represents an example of a periodontal chart that may be used.

Vestibular															
Tooth	2.3			2.4			2.5			2.6			2.7		
Probing depth	3	2	4	4	5	4	4	4	6	-	-	-	4	7	6
Recession				3	3	3	3	3	3	-	-	-			
Bleeding on probing							•		•	-	-	-	•		•

Lingual															
Tooth	2.3			2.4			2.5			2.6			2.7		
Probing depth	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	3	5	-	-	-	5	5	6
Recession										-	-	-			
Bleeding on probing										-	-	-	•	•	•

Mobility										-			2
Furcation										-			B-II

This example is a chart of the maxillary second quadrant, with tooth 2.6 missing. The probing depths, in millimetres, are listed, going from mesial on the left, to distal on the right. In this example, there is 3 mm of recession all along the buccal of teeth 2.4 and 2.5. No other recession is noted. There is bleeding on probing on the mesiobuccal and distobuccal of teeth 2.5 and 2.7, and all along the lingual of tooth 2.7. No other bleeding is noted. Tooth 2.7 has a buccal furcation Class II and a Class 2 mobility. There are no other mobility or furcation involvements on any other teeth/surfaces.

Important Definitions

<i>Immediate management:</i>	the management required at this appointment for that specific clinical case.
<i>Management:</i>	refers to all patient-centered therapies for that specific clinical case and may include preventive, restorative, surgical, pharmacological, non-pharmacological treatments, nutritional therapies, education, counseling, monitoring, and follow-up.
<i>Most appropriate management:</i>	refers to the most suitable management for that specific clinical case. Since the management of a situation can include several steps, "the most appropriate management" could include more than one answer.
<i>Most likely:</i>	refers to the most probable correct answer for that specific clinical case.

Preparation Materials

You are encouraged to use the NDEB resources available, including the released examination materials, on the NDEB website. These resources are for personal use only.

Exam Orientation

The ACJ will be administered electronically at Prometric test centres. It may also be administered electronically at additional event sites. The [NDEB's AFK and ACJ Electronic Exam Orientation](#) should be viewed prior to taking the ACJ.

During a computer-based examination, you may experience short technical delays. The NDEB has accounted for such delays in the time allotted for the examination.

ACJ Sample Questions and Answers

The ACJ Sample Questions and Answers document is available in the [Exam Resources](#) section of the NDEB website. You are strongly encouraged to visit the website in preparation for the ACJ.

Reference Texts

A list of reference materials used in Faculties of Dentistry in Canada can be found in the [Exam Resources](#) section of the NDEB website. The NDEB also references journal articles, clinical guidelines, and practice standards issued by specialty organizations.

Tooth Numbering System

The World Dental Federation (FDI) two-digit tooth numbering system is used in all examinations.

FDI / UNIVERSAL NUMBERING SYSTEM

PERMANENT DENTITION

FDI	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.1	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8	FDI
Universal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Universal
Universal	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	Universal
FDI	4.8	4.7	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.2	4.1	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8	FDI
RIGHT									LEFT								

PRIMARY DENTITION

FDI	5.5	5.4	5.3	5.2	5.1	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	FDI
Universal	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Universal
Universal	T	S	R	Q	P	O	N	M	L	K	Universal
FDI	8.5	8.4	8.3	8.2	8.1	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4	7.5	FDI
RIGHT						LEFT					

Training Courses

Be advised that the NDEB is not affiliated with, nor does it endorse any third-party providers of test preparation courses. The use of the NDEB's name by third parties, unless expressly authorised, is prohibited. The disclosure, distribution, solicitation, and reconstruction of NDEB examination content is strictly prohibited, as is the use of NDEB examination content for commercial purposes, including the released examination material on the NDEB website.

Copyright and Exam Security

All NDEB content, including examination content, is for personal use only. Any other use of NDEB content is strictly prohibited. Examples of prohibited use of NDEB content include, but are not limited to, receiving or disclosing NDEB content, reproducing (through memorization or by any other means), and publishing any NDEB content in whole or in part. Conduct that compromises the confidentiality and integrity of the NDEB's processes and examinations will be investigated.

Information on exam security and NDEB's Intellectual Property Statement can be found on the NDEB website.

Examination Day Regulations

You are required to follow all regulations. Any failure to comply will be formally documented and reported to the NDEB.

- You must be punctual for all sessions. If you arrive late, you may be denied entry to the examination.
- All devices with recording or transmitting and/or receiving abilities are prohibited. This includes all portable electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, tablets, laptops) and wearable smart technologies. These devices must be turned off and placed in the designated area. These devices cannot be accessed during the break.
- All watches are prohibited and must be placed in the designated area. These cannot be accessed during the break.
- You must not wear a hat, scarf, coat, outdoor clothing, hoodie with the hood up, or bulky clothing (except where the listed items constitute religious attire).
- You must empty all pockets before entering or leaving the examination room.
- Food is not allowed to be consumed in the examination room.
- Water is allowed in the examination room in a transparent bottle with the label removed. No other beverages are permitted.
- If you require food, medicine, or medical equipment during the examination, you must submit a request pursuant to the NDEB's [test accommodation](#) policy.
- Ear plugs will be provided. You will not be allowed to use your own ear plugs.
- You will be required to read and agree to a Confidentiality and Non-disclosure Agreement before you can begin the examination.
- You are prohibited from communicating, publishing, reproducing, or transmitting any part of your examination, in any form or by any means, verbal, written, or electronic, for any purpose.
- You will be provided with scratch paper, a pencil, and an eraser. You cannot write on anything other than the scratch paper provided. The scratch paper, pencils and eraser must be submitted to staff at the end of the examination.
- You cannot leave and re-enter the examination room unattended once the examination has started.

If may be necessary for the NDEB to introduce new regulations or modify existing regulations for specific examination administrations. Any new or modified regulations will supersede regulations published in the protocol.

Test Accommodations

Test accommodations are granted on an individual basis and are dependent on the nature and extent of the request, documentation provided, and requirements of the examination. Read the NDEB's policies and procedures for [test accommodations](#) on the NDEB website.

Exceptional Circumstances: Withdrawals, Compassionate Appeals, and Appeal of the Conduct of the Examination

Withdrawals

If you experience a health-related issue or personal circumstance prior to the start of an examination that will prevent you from demonstrating your ability, you must withdraw. If you do not attend the examination, you will not lose an attempt.

Login to your [NDEBConnect](#) account to withdraw from an examination. All withdrawals are subject to a fee.

Compassionate Appeals

If you believe you have been prevented from demonstrating your ability because of a serious medical circumstance or unanticipated medical circumstance during the examination, you can submit a compassionate appeal to have the results of the examination voided. Compassionate appeals must be submitted through your [NDEBConnect](#) account within seven days of the examination.

More information can be found in the [Compassionate Appeal](#) section of the website and in the [NDEB By-laws and policies](#).

Appeal of the Conduct of an Examination

If, during the examination, you believe there may have been an irregularity or inconsistency in the conduct of the examination that prevented you from demonstrating your ability, it must be immediately reported to staff at the examination centre.

Should you want to submit an appeal based on the reported irregularity or inconsistency, it must be submitted through your [NDEBConnect](#) account within seven days of the examination.

More information is available in the [Appeal of the Conduct of an Examination](#) section of the website and in the [NDEB By-laws and policies](#).

Results

Results are normally released within eight weeks of the examination. You will receive an email notification when your results are available in your online profile.

Results will be reported as a Pass/Fail. Those who receive less than 75 will also receive their test equated rescaled score.

Results will not be released by telephone, email, or fax.

Passing Standard

To assure a consistent level of difficulty, the NDEB uses test equating and re-scaling procedures to correlate raw scores to scores on a reference examination and to a standardized passing score of 75.

You must obtain a minimum test equated, re-scaled score of 75 to be successful on an NDEB examination.

Information on [test equating and re-scaling](#) is available on the NDEB website.

Appeals and Rescoring

If you receive a failing grade, you have 30 days from the date results are released to request a verification of your score.

Information can be found in the [Appeals and Rescoring](#) section of the NDEB website.

In no case will you have access to your answer score sheets or examination questions.

Repeats

The ACJ can be taken a maximum of three times.