



American Academy of Health Physics  
American Board of Health Physics

## Corner

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### From the Chair:

*George J. Vargo, CHP, Chair*

For over ten years the Board has instituted a number of measures to improve the quality and consistency of the Part II examination. Among these are a quality assurance review of draft questions, the use of multiple graders, and the application of a statistical adjustment to candidate scores to account for grader variability. While these measures have greatly improved Part II, they have also greatly increased the workload of our volunteer Part II Panel.

Unlike Part I, which is drawn from a list of validated questions, Part II questions are mainly developed from scratch each year. Given the relatively small number of questions on Part II (14 total) as compared to the 150 questions on Part I, it is a great challenge to achieve the proper mix of occupational settings and subject matter distribution based on our Domains of Practice. Over the last two years, the Board has considered a number of proposals to (1) improve the consistency of Part II while maintaining the highest possible quality and (2) reduce the workload on the Part II Panel. The Board is also concerned with making sure that the examination remains relevant to professional health physics practice and decided that a reexamination of the Domains of Practice is appropriate at this time.

At the Summer American Board of Health Physics (ABHP) Meeting, the Board voted to engage the services of a testing consultant. The consultant will be charged to (1) undertake a detailed reassessment of the Domains of Practice, (2) reevaluate the design of the Part II examination, and

(3) provide assistance to the Board in developing an examination bank for Part II. This proposal was accepted by the American Academy of Health Physics Executive Committee and negotiations with a testing consultant are in progress. The entire process is expected to take approximately three years to complete.

The reassessment of the Domains of Practice will involve a job-task analysis. Many of you are already familiar with this process.

Over the next year it is very likely that you will receive a questionnaire concerning the tasks you perform and the skills needed to perform your job. This data will be processed and published as a *Catalog of Knowledge and Skills for a Certified Health Physicist*. This catalog will then be used to develop a question bank for Part II. It will also be available as a study guide for the health physics community and might even be useful to the academic community in evaluating the content of health physics degree programs.

How will the Part II be different? At this point it is premature to speculate, however, it is likely that the new Part II will be drawn from a closed question bank as is the current practice with Part I. It is also likely that a large portion, if not all, of Part II will be machine-scored. How will Part II be different from Part I? Part I will remain an examination of basic health physics knowledge and Part II will continue to focus on problem solving in workplace situations.

In order to be successful, the Board will need your help in responding to questionnaires and surveys as well as participation in question-writing workshops. Meanwhile, the existing Part II Panel will continue to operate normally. I look forward to working with you as we take these important steps to assure that our certification remains the undisputed top credential in radiological protection.

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**Editor's Note:** Although too humble to mention it himself, in presenting the Part II enhancement plan proposal to the Academy Executive Committee, George Vargo offered to lead the effort from beginning to end. When you contact him to share your ideas for improving the current approach, be sure to thank him for the many hours he willingly commits to the pursuit of ABHP activities. ■