

N B C E 2025

# Student Leadership Forum

A Brief History of NBCE  
Exam Development & Scoring

Presented by:

**Bruce Shotts, D.C.**

NBCE Vice President of Testing





# About The NBCE



## Mission

**Ensuring professional competency and public safety through excellence in testing.**



# About The NBCE



## Vision

**Doctors of Chiropractic are  
universally regarded as highly  
qualified, competent professionals.**



# About The NBCE

## Values



**Lifelong Learning**



**Integrity**



**Fairness**



**Transparency**



**Accountability**



# Why The NBCE?



***The NBCE exists to safeguard the public.***

NBCE exams offer assurance to the general public that, regardless of where a chiropractor received their education, they possess sufficient knowledge of the basic and clinical sciences in conjunction with the necessary skills to practice chiropractic safely and effectively.



# Before the NBCE...



**NBCE Founder –  
Gordon L. Holman D.C.**

Before the formation of the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners (NBCE), chiropractic candidates took the same basic science exams as medical doctoral candidates.



**NBCE Headquarters in Cheyenne, Wyoming**

**Since each state created their own exam, testing was not standardized across the country, which did not uphold a uniform high standard of chiropractic.**

## NBCE Formation



The Federation of Chiropractic Licensing Boards (FCLB), commissioned a study that considered the formation of a national testing organization that would provide the same standardized exams throughout the country. This allowed all chiropractic candidates to be tested on the same merit, regardless of where they received their education.



## NBCE - Today



The NBCE was incorporated in 1963.

Each state legislature then considered their professional licensing laws and the possibility of requiring the exams designed by the NBCE.

State after state accepted or required candidates to successfully complete NBCE exams prior to their licensure.

Today, all 50 states and the District of Columbia utilize NBCE exams as part of their requirements to determine if and when a chiropractor is ready to practice professionally.

# NBCE Early History

First exam administered to 1,200 examinees for Part I, II and PHT.

**1965**



**1963**

NBCE incorporated in Texas with our first office in Cheyenne, Wyoming.



**1987**

Part III Exam is introduced.



**1990**

Moved to current headquarters in Greeley, Colorado.



**1993**

The first Practice/Job Analysis Survey is conducted.



**1996**

Part IV Practical Exam is introduced.



# NBCE Recent History

Acupuncture Exam introduced.

**2003**



Ethics and Boundaries Assessment Services (EBAS) is spun off as an NBCE wholly-owned, for-profit subsidiary.

**2013**



CBT/Part IV Advancement & Development Project initiated.

**2023**



**2002**

Special Purposes Examination for Chiropractic (SPEC) becomes NBCE's first computerized exam.



**2009**

International Board of Chiropractic Examiners is established.



**2019**

NBCE converts all written exams to Computer-Based Testing.



**2024**

CBT changes implemented for Part I, II, III, and PHT.



# The Doctors Behind Exam Development and Scoring



**Bruce Shotts, D.C.**

Vice President of Testing



**Andrew Gow, D.C.**

Practical Testing  
Manager



**Greg Crawford, D.C.**

Computer Based Testing  
Manager



**Igor Himelfarb, Ph.D.**

Director of Psychometrics  
& Research



# How Exam Questions Are Chosen



## Parts I, II and PHT

- College curricula dictates exam content.
- Faculty from chiropractic colleges as well as state board members throughout the United States participate in test development committees to approve content to be used on these exams.



## Parts III and IV

- State board and chiropractic college faculty members meet multiple times throughout the year to evaluate content that will appear on these exams.
- Input from state board members and results from the ***Practice Analysis of Chiropractic*** ensure that the exams reflect what chiropractors expect to experience in practice.



# Establishing **Chiropractic Competency**

## **PASS VS FAIL**



NBCE Exams provide an independent third-party assessment of a ***chiropractor's readiness to practice***, regardless of the school they attended or the state in which they choose to practice.

## **The passing score is established through a process called '*standard setting*':**



- Committee members incorporate their knowledge of examinees, curriculum, and instruction as they analyze and rate each question. Through discussion with their colleagues, they determine what examinees should know and be able to do before determining the ***final cut score***.
- Passing scores are periodically reviewed and re-examined when there is a significant change in a test plan.

Debunking the

# Bell Curve Myth

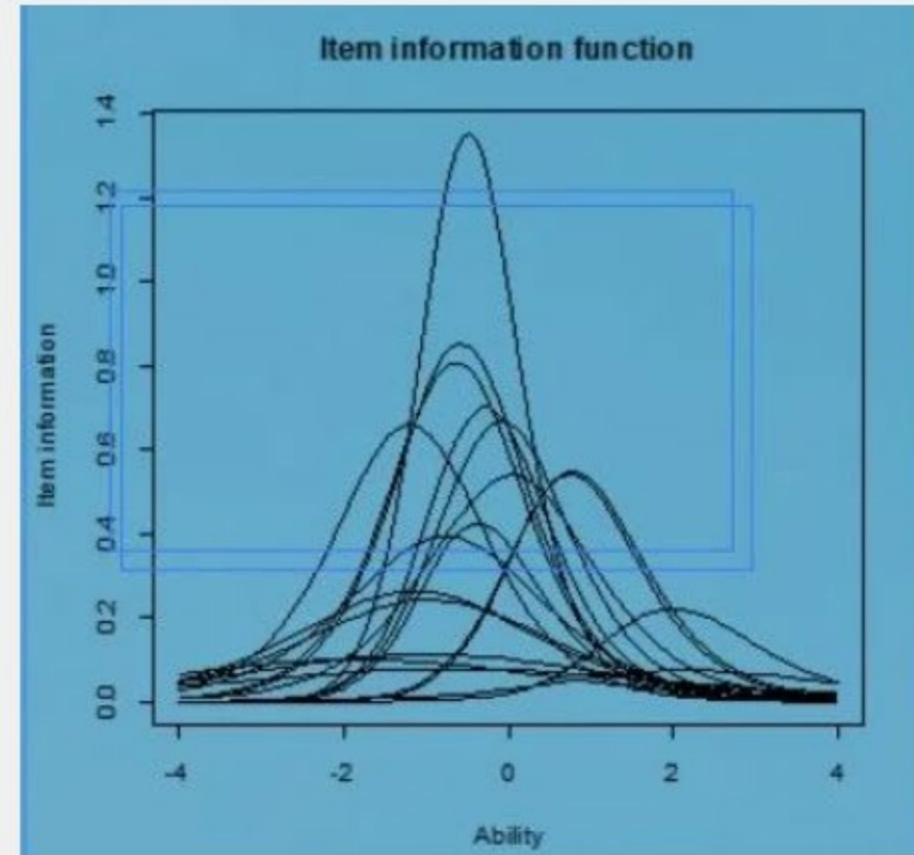
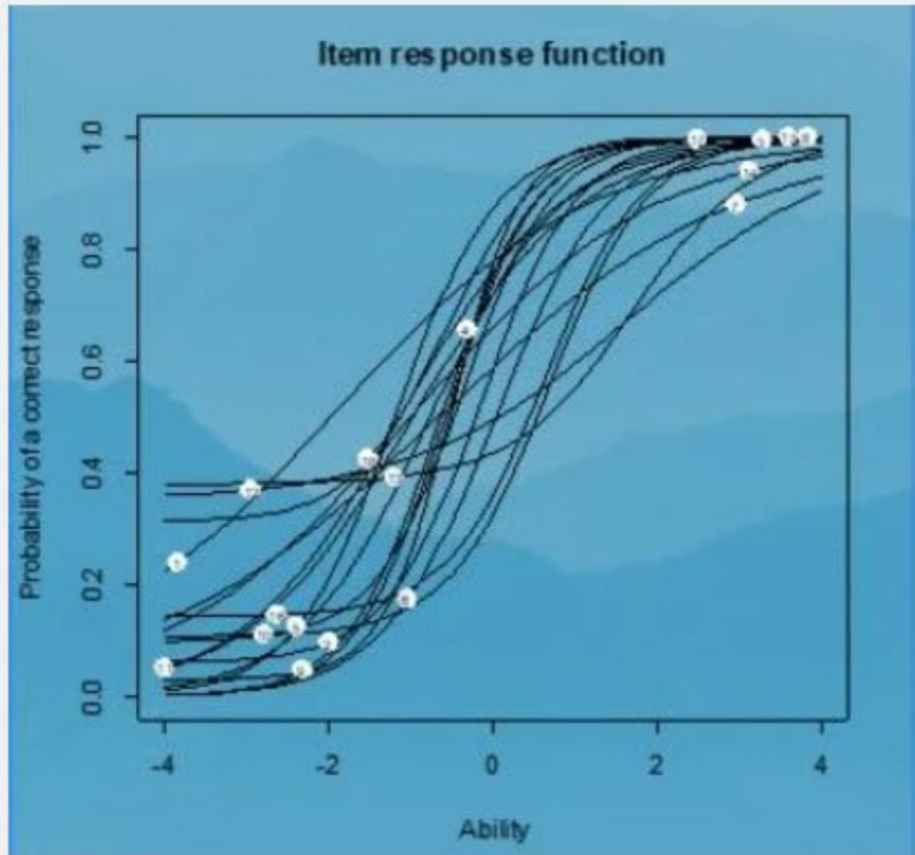
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The NBCE does not predetermine the number or percentage of examinees who will pass any of its exams.



- Theoretically as many as 100% could pass...or the passing rate could potentially be 0% if students do not meet the **cut score**, which establishes minimal competency to be a licensed chiropractor.
- Passing is based on individual performance, not on an established distribution of scores.

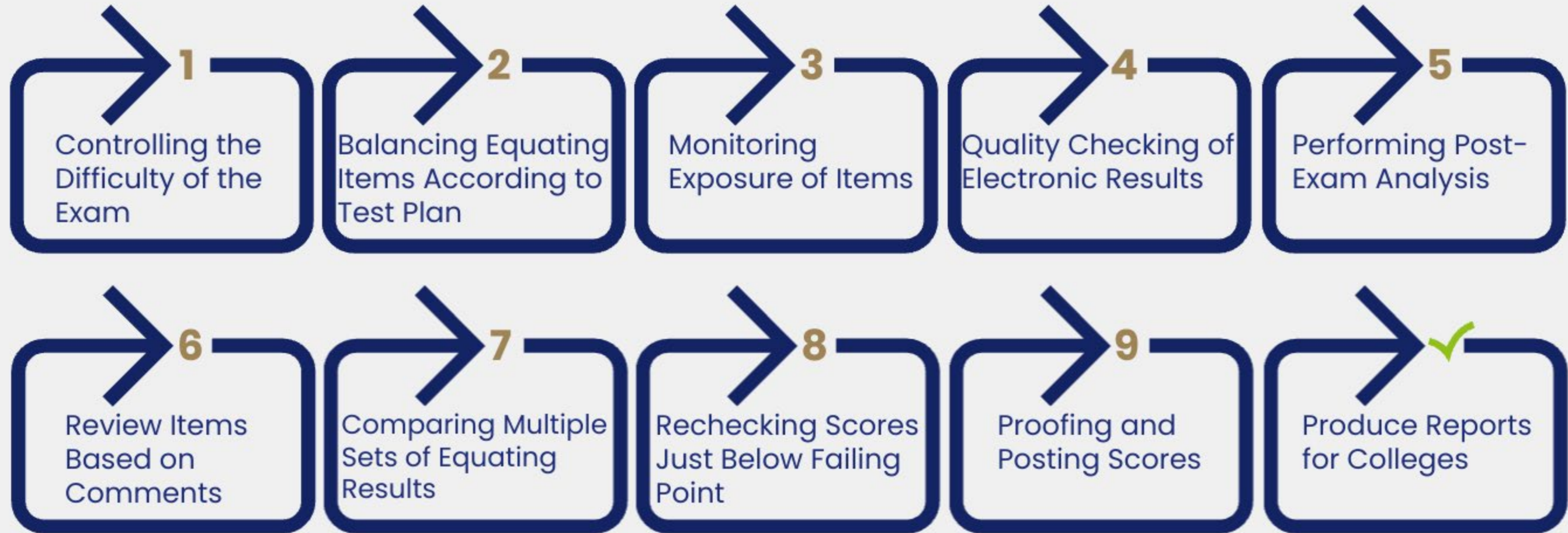
# Debunking the Bell Curve Myth



Exams are graded using **Item Response Theory** calculated with a **three-parameter logistic**. These parameters discern an exam question's (also known as item) **difficulty**, ability to **discern** between knowledgeable candidates, and the probability of an unknowledgeable candidate providing a correct response by **chance**.



# Multiple Steps of the Scoring Process





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