



## Corner

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 American Board of Health Physics  
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### Calculator Policy Revised

At the November 2000 meeting of the American Board of Health Physics (ABHP), the Executive Board made a decision to move the calculator policy provisions from the policy manual to the procedure manual. The reason for the change was to address the need to constantly update the calculator list so that the ABHP could make changes without American Academy of Health Physics (AAHP) Executive Committee approval. Furthermore, the Board decided to revise the number and type of calculators that would be allowed for use on both Part I and Part II exams. The first action of the Board was approved by the AAHP Executive Committee in February 2001. The approval was contingent upon the revised policy being published in the "CHP Corner" and the effective date would be the 2002 exam.

The Board published its intent to reduce the number of allowed calculators in the "CHP Corner" earlier this year. As a result of that article, members of the Board were asked if we intended to eliminate what is called Type I calculators in the ABHP Procedures from the list. While the initial response was yes, the question of whether it was the Board's intent to remove Type I calculators from the allowed calculator list was posed to the Board at the June 2001 meeting. The response by the Board membership was no. Consequently, the policy on calculators has been revised again. This is a revision to the Board Examination Procedures and essentially states that any Type I calculator is the only allowed calculator. Candidates will be required to indicate the make and model of the calculator that they use on the exam and sign a statement that it meets the definition of the Type I calculator. The candidates will also be required to clear the registers prior to the start of the exam. This will be effective for the 2002 exam.

The Board believed that the first calculator revision

was too prescriptive, placed too much burden on the ABHP to maintain a list of current calculators, and did not place enough burden on the Candidate to behave in an ethical manner. The definition of Type I calculator is any scientific or other calculator without programming or extensive data storage features (for example, more than eight registers) and without any "applications" ROM programming.

If you plan to sit for the ABHP exam in 2002, please make sure that you bring only a Type I calculator into the exam room. No other calculators will be allowed. If you have any questions you can contact ABHP Vice Chair Kathy Pryor or Program Director Nancy Johnson.

### Part I Changes

The American Board of Health Physics Executive Board has been monitoring the performance of the Part I exam over the past few years and has noticed that the percentage of candidates passing the exam has seen a dramatic decline over the past two years.

There are potentially several reasons for this decline. First, there was a Passing Point Workshop held in 1999 that resulted in raising the passing score from 92 to 94. Furthermore, the Part I panel was instructed in November of 1998 to begin replacing about 100 questions that had been on the exam for over 10 years. The Board instructed the Part I panel to do this because the Board members believed that the exam questions were "known" and in the public domain. Consequently, beginning with the 1999 exam, the Part I exam questions have been systematically changed. In this test year about 47% of the exam questions were changed. Consequently, candidates have not seen many of the questions before.

While the Board and Part I Panel expect the questions to perform well in discriminating the well-prepared candidate from those who are not, we are anticipating that there may be another year where the pass rate may not be as high as in the past because of candidate unfamiliarity with the exam.

In addition, because confidentiality of exam questions is critical to having an exam that performs well, there will be a motion before the Board at its November meeting to have candidates sign conduct statements which would make the distribution of knowledge gained by taking the exam to future candidates grounds for ineligibility for or revocation of certification. This last issue was suggested by Academy members at the AAHP general meeting in Cleveland. ■