The American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) and the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) are aware that the purpose and intended uses of the Pharmacy Curriculum Outcomes Assessment (PCOA) may not be well understood by key stakeholders in the profession. It has come to our attention that individual PCOA exam results are being requested for use as evaluative measures outside of the intended scope and purpose.

The PCOA was originally designed and should primarily be used as one component of a multi-component assessment of Pharm D curricula and student performance. It is intended for use by the individual colleges and schools of pharmacy and ACPE to provide an objective measure of performance on topics covered in US pharmacy curricula. For these purposes the PCOA results have been validated 1) to compare student performance within an examinee cohort or with a national representative sample; 2) to compare program level results within a national representative sample (or with peer programs); 3) to track student growth over time; 4) as a benchmark along with other key assessment measures included in a student portfolio; and 5) to include in educational research studies.

To date there has not been sufficient evidence that PCOA scores are a reliable measure of students’ ability to apply their knowledge in a practice context. In developing and validating the PCOA, NABP has not verified the integrity of the PCOA for purposes other than those noted in the preceding paragraph and strongly advise against the use of individual student scores for post-graduate placement (e.g., resident selection, employment decisions, graduate school admissions) or other uses.

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