



CUSTOMIZED ASSESSMENT SERVICES (CAS) CASE STUDY

BOOSTING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SHARPENING TEACHING

With the help of the CAS Practice option

When **Albany Medical College (AMC)** added the CAS Practice option alongside its proctored CAS exams, student participation in optional formative assessments increased dramatically. Faculty leveraged this momentum to create richer, application-focused review sessions — helping students shift from memorization to clinical reasoning. Rebecca Keller, PhD, Professor and Former Assistant Dean for Medical Education (Preclinical Curriculum, 2007-2023), shares how AMC transformed its assessment approach and the impact it had on teaching and learning.

AT-A-GLANCE IMPACT



PARTICIPATION SURGE

Optional formative assessments saw participation rise from about 25-30 students to approximately 120 students (out of 145) per class.



BETTER CONVERSATIONS

Discussion during post-exam group reviews shifted to why answers are correct and how to apply concepts.



EASY ADOPTION FOR CAS USERS

Teams began using the CAS Practice option for quizzes without any additional training or workflow changes.



FEWER EXAM DISPUTES

Standardized, high-quality questions reduced the burden of negative student feedback about exam items.



I really think that the whole CAS program has strengthened our faculty's ability to teach."

— REBECCA KELLER, PHD, PROFESSOR AND FORMER ASSISTANT DEAN FOR MEDICAL EDUCATION (PRECLINICAL CURRICULUM, 2007-2023)

IMPLEMENTING THE CAS PRACTICE OPTION

AMC has used CAS for over a decade. In 2021-2023, the preclinical curriculum transitioned to an 18-month, fully integrated model, and leadership committed to building all summative exams with CAS. When the CAS Practice option became available, AMC immediately began using it for almost all preclinical courses, administering a CAS Practice exam before each summative exam.

HOW IT MADE A DIFFERENCE

MEASURABLY HIGHER STUDENT UPTAKE

Before using the CAS Practice option, AMC offered optional, faculty-written quizzes, with only about 25-30 students participating. With CAS Practice exams, around 120 students routinely complete formative assessments, and one recent administration saw 92% of students (133 of 145) participate.



CAS brings really good, high-quality questions and consistency students appreciate.”

STRONGER FOCUS ON APPLICATION AND REASONING

CAS Practice exams are available Friday through Monday, the weekend before each summative exam. On Tuesday, faculty host group review sessions to discuss why the correct answers are correct and connect them back to course materials. Students reported feeling better prepared for exams and shifted their study strategies from memorization to application and reasoning.



It really was more about application...The faculty came back after the CAS Practice exam to go over why the answer is correct and link back to lectures and small group activities.”

LESS FRICTION AROUND ASSESSMENT QUALITY

Faculty no longer receive as many complaints about item construction or multiple correct answers. Standardized, vetted items have reduced post-exam debates and the burden of negative student feedback.



Now teachers can just teach...they know the questions are well thought out and don't get those emails about 'that question was about a tiny factoid' or 'there were two right answers.’”

RESULTS THAT MATTER

AMC's experience highlights the benefits educators value that the CAS Practice option can deliver for any institution.



CONFIDENCE & PREPAREDNESS

Students “knew what to expect” and adjusted their study strategies toward reasoning. While raw score gains weren’t the focus, faculty observed improvement in the quality of preparation.



TEACHING QUALITY

Exposure to exemplary items helps faculty “see how the information is applied in a very good question,” strengthening lecture design.



OPERATIONAL EASE

Adoption was essentially immediate and seamless. For teams already using CAS, there’s no new workflow — just select the Practice bank and publish.



INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Given the perceived value for USMLE® Step 1 and Step 2 CK preparation, leadership readily supported funding to run practice exams before every summative exam.

Find out how CAS can make a difference in your institution.

Request a consultation today at nbme.org/CASconsultation.

This is one school's experience with the CAS Practice option. Results or outcomes may vary and depend on factors beyond NBME's control, such as student participation, individual study habits, faculty support and engagement, and/or variations in curriculum, among other things.

All quotes cited in this material are from Rebecca Keller, PhD, Professor and Former Assistant Dean for Medical Education (Preclinical Curriculum, 2007-2023).



NBME / 3750 MARKET STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104, USA
COPYRIGHT ©2025 NBME. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.