



CLEANER DATA, LESS FRICTION

CAS IN THE FIELD



When a U.S. medical school redesigned its curriculum, leaders faced a challenge that may sound familiar — how do you assess student learning in a way that’s consistent, defensible and instructionally meaningful? The answer became increasingly clear: rely on NBME® Customized Assessment Services (CAS) to build assessments that do more for faculty, students and the curriculum itself.

AT-A-GLANCE IMPACT



Broad use across the curriculum

Nearly all pre-clerkship summative exams, plus a geriatric clerkship, now use CAS, replacing a process faculty described as extremely laborious.



More confidence in assessment quality

Vetted NBME items replaced faculty-written questions, reducing post-exam disputes with students and ambiguity about answer quality.



Actionable data that drives decisions

Faculty and curriculum leaders use historical performance data and student-level online item analysis to evaluate learning and identify curriculum gaps.



Better alignment with student needs

Students responded positively to CAS, recognizing the alignment with NBME-style questions they’ll face in licensure exams.

FROM EXAM BURDEN TO INSTITUTIONAL ASSET

Today, CAS is used across nearly every summative exam in the pre-clerkship curriculum — with the exception of the first gross anatomy course — and extends into clinical training through a geriatrics clerkship assessment. It's a broad deployment, and it didn't happen by accident. Each expansion has been driven by the practical and analytical value CAS delivers.



TIME SAVED

Before CAS, faculty spent significant time and energy writing their own exam questions, a huge time investment with limited instructional payoff. Beyond the workload, faculty-written items also created security headaches: Once students had seen a question, it effectively had to be retired, leading to regular rewrites.

CAS shifted that dynamic entirely. Faculty now draw from a bank of vetted, high-quality items rather than building from scratch — freeing up both time and mental bandwidth.

“

[The faculty-written exam process] is extremely laborious.”

— AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT THE MEDICAL SCHOOL

FEWER DISPUTES, MORE FOCUS ON LEARNING

Post-exam arguments about question quality are a familiar drain at many schools. Students push back on ambiguous wording, claim multiple answers are correct or lobby for partial credit. With the vetted questions in CAS, that friction has largely disappeared.

The result is that energy previously spent managing post-exam disputes can now go toward what matters — understanding how students are actually learning.

“

It takes away the quibbling... It's just cleaner.”

— AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT THE MEDICAL SCHOOL

DATA THAT GOES DEEPER

The operational benefits of CAS are only part of the story. The real value lies in the data — past item performance, class-level results and student-level online item analysis — and what it makes possible.

The ability to drill down to the student level enables faculty to examine individual student performance patterns, identify where support is needed and make targeted instructional changes. The school also uses CAS data longitudinally — tracking item performance over time, comparing results across campuses and rotations, and calibrating standards for honors eligibility in the geriatrics assessment.

“

[Student-level online item analysis] was just a game changer when it became available.”

— AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT THE MEDICAL SCHOOL



CURRICULUM GAPS, MADE VISIBLE

This school took its analytical approach even further by building a custom exam to be administered at the beginning of the second year. The exam drew from first-year content to measure what students retained and whether remediation approaches were actually working. That kind of targeted, customized assessment provided the evidence needed to demonstrate where gaps existed and what changes were required.

STRONGER PREPARATION

Students have responded positively overall, in part because the format feels more aligned with what they'll face in licensure exams. They'd prefer to review the questions afterward — a feature available with the CAS Practice option, but not with CAS summative exams — but that hasn't dulled their appreciation. What CAS delivers is invaluable: the confidence that comes from taking well-constructed, familiar-feeling assessments, with attention directed toward meaningful preparation rather than exam disputes.

RESULTS THAT MATTER

This school's experience highlights the benefits some educators value — and what CAS can deliver for any institution.



Assessment quality

Replacing faculty-written items with vetted CAS questions reduces ambiguity, strengthens exam security and minimizes post-exam disputes.



Operational efficiency

Building exams from a curated item bank is faster and more sustainable than writing from scratch. Schools save time at every step: construction, review and post-exam management.



Data-informed decisions

CAS gives faculty and curriculum leaders data they can act on to track patterns, evaluate remediation, identify gaps and offer the evidence needed for curricular change.



Student confidence

Students who encounter NBME-quality items in their coursework may arrive at licensure exams with a clearer sense of what to expect. For many, that familiarity can translate to greater confidence.

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

Request a consultation today at nbme.org/CASconsultation.

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



NBME / 3750 MARKET STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104, USA
COPYRIGHT ©2026 NBME. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.