

**Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ministry of Health**



**Health Professionals' Competency
Assessment and Licensure Directorate**

Candidates' Manual

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

March 2019

Message from the Director

As compared to the WHO standard of health professionals to population ratio for developing countries, Ethiopia has wide gap yet and the government has been working to increase the number of health professionals by increasing the intake of health science colleges and by opening new institutions.

While this helped to reduce the gap we have compared to the standard, the quality of the teaching and learning process hence, the service provided by the professionals became an issue for different stakeholders and the government as well. For this reason and since licensure exams are widely practiced internationally in different countries to insure the quality of health service, the federal ministry of health took the initiative to launch licensure exam initiative within human resource directorate since July 2015. Since then two round pilot tests given and reports discussed with different stakeholders.

The initiative currently led by a directorate established for this purpose, which is composed of three case teams and has been doing different activities to strengthen the system and capacitate the directorate to implement the exam in wider range with a much better organization and quality. As part of this, different documents were prepared to help facilitate the exam process and create transparency and sustainability of the program.

In the preparation of this document and other manuals, different examining institutions and countries experiences were reviewed, highly valued experts from different higher teaching institutions and Jhpiego- Ethiopia were involved for whom my deep appreciation goes for and for the high commitment and hardworking of the staffs at the federal ministry of health.

To this end, I would like to call for a collaborative work of all stakeholders in the health sector to this initiative, which indeed has high contribution to quality assurance of the health service delivery and yet cannot be effective unless all relevant bodies put their hands together for its implementation and continuity.



Dr. Ruth Nigatu

Health professionals' competency
assessment and licensure directorate
Director.



Acknowledgement

This Candidates' manual for competency assessment and licensure is a contribution from several educators and concerned individuals with a genuine interest to propel Ethiopian health professions' education forward. The guideline serves as a springboard for introducing the principles of defining and maintaining standards in health sciences education. This document was prepared in different workshops held in Debre-Birhan, Adama, and Bishoftu. FMOH would like to acknowledge the following participants for their immense contribution.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

COC	Center of Competency
COPD	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
DM	Diabetes mellitus
FMHACA	Food, Medicine and Health Care Administration and Control Authority
FMOH	Federal Ministry of Health
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HERQA	Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency
HESC	Higher Education Strategic Center
HPCALD	Health Professional Competency Assessment and Licensure Directorate
HPCALE	Health Professional Competency Assessment and Licensure Examination
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MPL	Minimum Acceptable Performance level
NBE	National Board of Examinations
NHPCA	National Health Professional Competency Assessment
NPPE	National Professional Practice Examination
OSCE	Objectively Structured Clinical Examination

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1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) asserted that no matter how many individuals are educated and deployed; health professionals cannot transform population health unless they have the necessary competencies. Hence, the WHO recommended changes in regulations including certification and licensing of graduates. It is also known that many countries around the world including those in North America, Europe and Africa verify competence and fitness to practice of health professionals by administering standard qualification or licensure examinations.

The Government of Ethiopia recognizes that healthcare is one of the crucial components of basic social services with direct linkage to growth and development of the country as well as to the welfare of the society. The quality of health care delivered in a country has an immediate and long-term impact on the quality of life, livelihood, morbidity, mortality of its citizens, on the nation's economy and its national security. Accordingly, the Ministry of Health (MOH) is committed to reduce morbidity, mortality, disability and to improve the health status of Ethiopian people by providing and regulating health services. Health professionals' competency assessment is among the approaches of regulating health service; hence MOH designed health professional Competency assessment and licensure examination.

The sole purpose of competency assessment is to identify health professionals who possess the minimum basic knowledge and experience necessary to perform tasks on the job safely and competently, but not to select the "top" candidates. It is also to validate safe and effective medical practice, job-related skills and knowledge to provide an independent assessment and documentation of competency. Therefore, competency assessment is very different from academic or employment examination.

This manual has been developed for individuals who are candidates for licensing examination as health professional graduate. As such, it contains information on eligibility requirements, the application process, ongoing responsibilities to maintain certification and a variety of other important topics. Candidates are responsible for

becoming familiar with its contents and using it in completing the certification process. It will also serve as a requirement for both Ethiopian and foreign graduates for registration issuing license to practice or employment in the health system. For much of the profession's history, a bachelor's degree from an accredited health institution was considered adequate preparation for the exam. Those candidates had certified but didn't work for at least two years will be re-assessed. Failing to follow these instructions may, in some instances, result in an allegation of cheating or disciplinary misconduct. Ignorance of the rules is not an acceptable defense. For further information, the candidate can visit the web site of MOH <http://www.moh.gov.et/>

2. Objective

- To provide detail information for candidates about important preconditions, rights and responsibilities during the examination process.

3. General Information Before exam

3.1 About Candidate Eligibility

Candidates are eligible if they meet the following criteria:

3.1.1 Eligibility criteria for new graduates

1. Being registered in an official Public or accredited private Health Science Colleges or Universities.
2. Candidates who have passed all courses delivered by the institution.
3. Every candidate that seeks to take the exam must complete a candidate eligibility form signed by the responsible body of the institution.

3.1.2 Eligibility Requirements for Internationally educated candidates

- International applicants must hold first degree in any health science and medical programs and able to provide their authenticated documents from Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA)/other concerned bodies.

3.2 Special Accommodations Policy and Process

Candidates who May apply for special accommodation includes those with:

- Documented /Diagnosed disabilities that would prevent them from taking the examination.
- Transitory conditions like pregnancy, breast feeding mothers, fractures, sprain.
- Chronic medical illness (DM, Epilepsy, heart disease, COPD) May apply for special accommodation.
- The institution should be notified by special accommodations requiring candidates two weeks prior to the starting date of the examination using the form on Annex I.

The special accommodation includes

- Creating conducive environment for candidates with disabilities.
- Providing available waiting area for baby caregivers.
- Protecting pregnant candidates from unfavorable condition.
- Candidates with chronic illness who have evidences for their illness can be provided with the needed feasible arrangement according to their illness.

3.3 Exam Application and registration

Anybody can apply if he/she meets the eligibility requirements.

- Registration will be processed through your respective institution and if not use the exam registration form generated by the directorate in person and/or online (Annex II)
- Candidates are strongly encouraged to complete their applications at least 30 days prior to the opening of the examination.
- Applicant must complete and submit the registration form based on the instruction provided by the registrar.
- During the registration submit all required originals with an exact photocopy of the original documentation, including:

- ✓ Completed registration form
- ✓ Signed Consent
- ✓ Two passport size photos
- ✓ Original with copy of Diploma and Transcript for new graduates if applicable otherwise
Official transcript or cumulative grade report from their Institution should be sent to the directorate
- ✓ Qualification equivalence proof from HERQA (Authenticated document by HERQA)
(applicable only for international applicants)
- ✓ Students' ID card or passport
- ✓ Application fees as requested.

- If the applicants name has changed after being register for an exam, the original document, and/or court order document must be present on the exam day.
- The registration/schedule/ timetable and exam centers for examination or re-examination will be communicate with the HEIs and announced at Ministry of Health official web sites/ notice board.
- The final list of candidates should be noticed/posted to the candidates before 2 weeks, if the applicant is not on the list, He/she should report to the exam center within 5 days after the notification.
- If an applicant's name does not appear on the list, the candidate shall not sit for the exam.
- The registrar shall confirm students who meet the eligibility requirements.
- Late applicants or those who miss registration in the given time table can apply for next examination within two-year period.
- Those who failed to pass the initial exam can be register for the next schedule until the maximum trial has reached.

3.4 Preparation for assessment

- Registration must be completed according to registrar schedules
- Read through the candidates' guideline
- Must know when and where the exam will be given and shall be available one hour before the conduct of the assessment
- Candidate must follow the dressing code
- When candidate arrive at the exam center they will be required to present a proper type of identification (Admission card and/or ID card)
- Candidates must keep their admission card and/or ID with them at all times.

3.5 Withdrawal

- Candidates could request withdrawal from the examination in a minimum of two weeks prior to the exam date.
- Candidates who wish to re-schedule an exam must contact the HPCALD

4. General Information during Exam

The HPCALD examination is a high stake examination that candidates are required to behave appropriately and dress in a professional manner throughout their examination time.

4.1 Code of Conduct

During the exam, Candidates should -

- Arrive to exam center in time. If a candidate arrives 30 minutes late, he/she will not be allowed to enter the examination room. Moreover, not allowed to enter and go out of the exam room once the OSCE has been started.
- Always wear their badges or keep their admission card/ ID on the table throughout the exam period.
- Not allowed to bring reference materials, blank paper, note pads or language dictionaries into the exam center.
- Not allowed to smoke, eat or drink (except water & Candy) in the room.
- Not allowed to bring any type of electronic devices like mobile phones, tablets, smart watches, camera devices and calculator into the assessment center.
- Not allowed to take their baggages in the exam room, they should keep their baggage of any kind in the prepared storage room if available.
- Not allowed to carry weapons and sharp materials into the exam center.
- Visitors (parents, Friends) are not permitted to enter at the exam center.
- Not allowed to disturb other candidates or cause them anxiety.
- Not allowed to change given seat unless ordered by the examiner.
- Not allowed to give or receive assistance to or from other candidate during the examinations
- Not allowed to leave the exam room before 1 hour even If she/he completes the exam before the end of allotted time.
- If a Candidate has an emergency or needs to use the restroom, he/she should raise his or her hand and must gain authorization by exam supervisor to leave the exam center. Only one Candidate at a time is permitted to leave the room and shall be accompanied by invigilator or supervisor.

- Be required to check-out and check-in again upon re-entering the Exam center. Note; the examination time will not stop and no extra time will be allotted.
- Follow the sequences of OSCE stations according to the arrangement (See Annex VI)

4.2 Dressing code

The candidate needs to respect the following Dressing Codes

- Wear a clean cloth which is free of rips and holes and not overly restrictive or revealing.
- Head Veil/Turban: Can be worn on religious grounds.
- Candidates' hair, moustaches and beards must be neatly groomed. Long hair (below the shoulders) must be tied back or up. Hair decorations should not be worn.
- Cannot use perfume or cologne or any other scented products.
- Cannot wear cape or hat in exam rooms.
- Be kept Nails short and unvarnished with no extensions or decoration.
- Use make up in a moderate way.
- Only wear wedding or commitment ring. No other jeweler is allowed.
- Wear plain flat and rubber soled Shoes, enclosing the whole foot and not made of porous or absorbent material in order to protect the foot from bodily fluids and equipment, not wear, shorts or sandals.

N.B: in addition to the above dressing code, Candidates should wear the appropriate professional dressing (white gown, scrub, etc.) during OSCE examination.

4.3 Protocol in the Event of Suspected Cheating

- Cheating practices in exam center includes:
 1. If an invigilator notices or suspects an examinee are looking at another's paper
 2. If an examinee is found using written materials other than the exam materials
 3. If an examinee is found using electronic materials (like cameras, cell phones)
 4. Other misconducts like: being loud, disruptive, causing any kind of altercation, detaching examination materials and any forceful act in exam rooms.

If the candidates violate and shows cheating act, the following measures will be taken.

- If the Invigilator suspects cheating, they may confiscate (take away) a candidate's Exam materials, as well as any other document, object or materials that could be used for cheating, and require the candidate or other persons to leave the exam center.
- The examiner reports through Incident form for any suspected cheating and measures taken on the examinee to the supervisor of the exam center. (See Annex III)

5. General Information after Exam

5.1 Candidate Guidance on Special Circumstances of the exam

Any events that has significantly disrupted taking the exam such as Serious or acute Illness, arriving late, and being absent can be treated as Special Circumstances.

- If you are unable to attend, because you are ill, or become ill during an examination which prevents you from engaging with the exam, you should complete and submit the Special Circumstances application form (See Annex IV) within 72 hours after the completion of exam with legal medical certificate. And if the evidences are tangible and accepted the candidate will take the exam in the next round.
- If candidates fail to arrive within 30 minutes or absent for the exam due to different reasons candidates will need to contact assessment center within 72 hours following the scheduled appointment. Then, if the evidences are tangible and accepted the candidate will take the exam in the next round.

5.2 Grounds for dismissal or cancellation of the exam results

- Candidates who do not comply with the exam Centre instructions or rules and regulations, may be asked to leave the exam Centre and their fees if they have paid will not be refunded. Such incidents will be reported by the examiners and will be investigated.
- When Cheating occurs and the code of conduct is infringed or disrupted (declared by the examination committee) the result of candidate will be cancelled.

5.3 The passing standard (pass, fail)

The overall score for the entire examination is computed and compared against a pre-determined minimum acceptable performance level, or passing score. This level is set by a group of content experts and educators who, for each question on the exam, determine whether an examinee just above the competency threshold would be expected to select the correct response.

5.4 Disclosure of exam result report

A Pass or Fail Score Report will be confidentially mailed directly to each respective institution and/ or each candidate or will be notified with formal Letter or certification after answer sheet has been submitted, scored, analyzed and compiled. Result should be notified within 6-10 weeks after administration of the exam.

5.5 Re-assessment procedures

- If candidates' scores do not meet the passing standard requirement for certification or licensure, it is must for them to retake the license exam.
- HPCALD will only allow Examinees to take the examination a maximum of four times after first attempt.
- It is recommended that candidates wait for approximately 90 days from their last release of exam result in order to allow sufficient time to prepare, to take the license exam again.
- Candidate who is applying for re-examination must register either in person at registrar team, or through online registration system using their registration number.
- On receipt of candidate application, the candidate will be issued admission card and examination schedule.
- Upon first failure- a candidate will receive a rehabilitative coaching from his/her own training institution and agreement should be signed with the student to ensure readiness for the exam. Third attempt is at a candidate's own risk for both apprenticeship and other payments or extraneous costs.

5.6 Appeal Systems and Feedback

- If you are dissatisfied with a service that the licensing examination center is providing, or with the person who is providing it, then you can raise the matter as a complaint. (See Annex V)
- You should always try to resolve a problem as close as possible to its source. So, for example, if you have a problem with your examiner you should report immediately to the examination supervisor.
- If you are dissatisfied with the outcome you can make a formal complaint to the HPCALD.
- If candidate has a tangible evidence of an unfair treatment of any sort by examination administrators, invigilators and assessors may appeal to the supervisor at the examination center on the same day.
- If a Candidate feels there is an error within an item, they should note this on the Candidate Comment Form included in the Exam Booklet. (See Appendix VI)
- The examination supervisor can appoint a team/committee, which is composed of supervisor, one examiner, and representative from the institution to investigate the issue as necessary and come up with a decision.
- The committee would present the results of the investigation and its recommendations to the health professionals' competency assessment and licensure directorate (HPCALD) which will then make the final decision and take actions.
- If the committee however concludes beyond doubt that it was a false, claim on the part of the candidate (especially if repeated) actions might be taken against that particular candidate based on type and severity of misconduct.

6. General Exam and Exam Center Information

The licensure examinations are developed aiming to measure examinee practical knowledge, the application of general concepts and standards of a candidate. The question items are developed by subject matter experts from different education institutions and health facilities across the country based on recognized international standards.

- The exam center will be at your home institutions where you have attended your education unless informed to be at different site.
- The licensure examination is comprised of multiple choice questions (MCQs) and Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) or only multiple choice questions (MCQs). A candidate will take either both exams or only the MCQs if OSCE is not introduced and has to pass the exam format he has taken to be licensed.
- The MCQ will be composed of 150 to 350 multiple choice questions and will take around 4hrs. Multiple choice questions will exam candidates' didactic knowledge and its application. The questions are of clinical scenarios which set the context for examining applied knowledge, reasoning, analysis and interpretation.
- The performance (skill) examination will have a total of 8 to 16 OSCE stations lasting 5-15 minutes based on the specific cadre of health professionals to be examined. The stations merely focus on exam candidates' psychomotor skill.
- During OSCE, Candidates may be assigned to start at any station. Candidates will proceed sequentially from their starting point in a clockwise pattern.
- Candidates receive their starting station position on the day of the exam, which will be listed on the candidate badge issued at the registration desk.

7. Annexes

Annex - I: Request form for special Accommodation

Please complete this form and the Documentation of Disability-Related Needs on the reverse side and submit it with your application at least two weeks prior to your requested examination date.

The information you provide and any documentation regarding your disability and your need for accommodation in exam will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Candidate Information

Candidate ID # _____

Requested Exam Center: _____

Name (First, middle, Last)

Mailing Address

City

State

Zip Code

Daytime Telephone Number

Email Address

Special Accommodations

I request special accommodations for the _____ examination.

Please provide (check all that applies):

_____ Reader

_____ Extended exam time (time and a half)

_____ Reduced distraction environment

_____ Please specify below if other special accommodations are needed.

Comments: _____

PLEASE READ AND SIGN:

I give my permission for my diagnosing professional to discuss with HPCALE staff my records and history as they relate to the requested accommodation.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Annex II - Application Form

Application/Registration Form for HPCALE

Before completing a NHPCALE registration form **you will need to read the NHPCALE candidates' manual and application requirement.**

Please submit completed registration form and all documentation to the Directorate. **Incomplete applications will not be processed.**

PLEASE TYPE USING BOLD LETTER.

1. Applicant Name:		<p>Photo</p> <p>Attach a recent passport sized Photograph of yourself here.</p> <p>Please do not staple</p>
2. Fathers Name:		
3. Grandfather Name:		
4. Date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy): _ _ / _ _ / _ _ _ _		
5. Gender: Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>		Nationality: <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Physical Address: Region _____ Woreda _____ City _____		
8. Telephone		9. Email
10. Name of Educational Institution		Type: Private <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/>
11. Qualification		Date of Completion
12. Is this the first time you are taking this examination? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
13. If no,	Last exam date:	
	Registration number:	

14. I am applying to take HPCALD for

- Medicine Nursing Health Officer
 Midwifery Anesthesia Pharmacy
 Medical Laboratory Technician

15. Examination Type:

- Only MCQ Only OSCE Both OSCE & MCQ

16. Preferred HPCALE Exam date for MCQ:

(please refers to the examination schedule stated by the Directorate of Licensure Examination)

17. Preferred HPCALE Exam date for OSCE:

(please refers to the examination schedule stated by the Directorate of Licensure Examination)

18. Preferred Examination Center:

(please refer to list of accredited HPCALE examination center)

19. Please make sure you have included the following documents with your application. Failure to do so will result in your application being returned to you

Required Document	Yes attached	Not attached
a. Completed registration form		
b. Signed Consent		
c. Original diploma and Transcript		
d. One Copy of diploma and Transcript		

Annex III - Incident report form**Health professionals' competency assessment and licensure Examination
Incident report form**

Type of incident:	
Course ID:	Health Professional Category: _____
Paper title:	
Exam Start Time:	Date:
Time of Incident:	Time of Incident:
Candidate ID:	Academic Year _____
Candidate Name:	
Details of Incident & Action Taken (please print):	
Suspected Academic Dishonesty Notice issued <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Copy of Suspected Academic Dishonesty Notice attached <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Confiscated Items (list):	
Name of Supervisor:	Signature:
Additional action taken (please print):	
Attachments:	
Name of Supervisor:	Signature: Date:
Also witnessed by Supervisor:	Signature: Date:
Additional Comments:	
Examinations Office use:	
Signature:	Date:

Annex IV - Application for special circumstances

<i>Health Professionals Competency Assessment and Licensing examination Directorate</i> <i>Ministry Of Health, Ethiopia</i>	Application for special circumstances To be used for all exams
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Please complete and return this form to: HPCALD by email or any other available methods:
 Email: -----

This form is to be used if you would like an incident circumstance to be taken into consideration when your exam script is marked. Please read the incident form before sending an application to make sure that you understand the circumstances and situations that can be considered.

All special circumstances applications must be submitted before 72 hours of following the exam day.

Personal details			
Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)			
Email		Telephone	

The exam(s) you wish instructing circumstances to be considered for

Exam subject	Exam date	Candidate number	Exam centre

Incidents details

Please indicate the category of mitigating circumstances that you are applying for

Personal circumstances or medical condition

Family circumstances or medical condition

Other (please state below):

Supporting documentation

Please indicate the type of supporting documentation that you have provided with your application

- Medical or death certificate
- Police/Emergency Services Report
- Employer's letter
- Other (please state below):

Explanation of the incident circumstances applied for

Please provide a detailed explanation of **how** you believe these circumstances affected your exam performance:

Annex V- Compliant submission form

If evidence to the contrary is reported, then the member of staff may be subject to disciplinary proceedings

Your Name	
Id No	
Address	
Email	
Date Exam of Competence	
Please give a brief outline of your compliant	
Please explain what steps you have taken to resolve your compliant with the relevant body	
Please explain why you are dissatisfied with the response you have received?	
Please indicate what outcome or further action you are expected	

Please provide any documents you believe support your complaint.

I declare that the information given is true and that I am willing to answer further questions if necessary: Signed: Date:

This form should be submitted to the NBE, Competence Exam Centre, in a sealed envelope and it will be forwarded for review.

For Official Use Only:

Date Received	
Complaint Acknowledged	

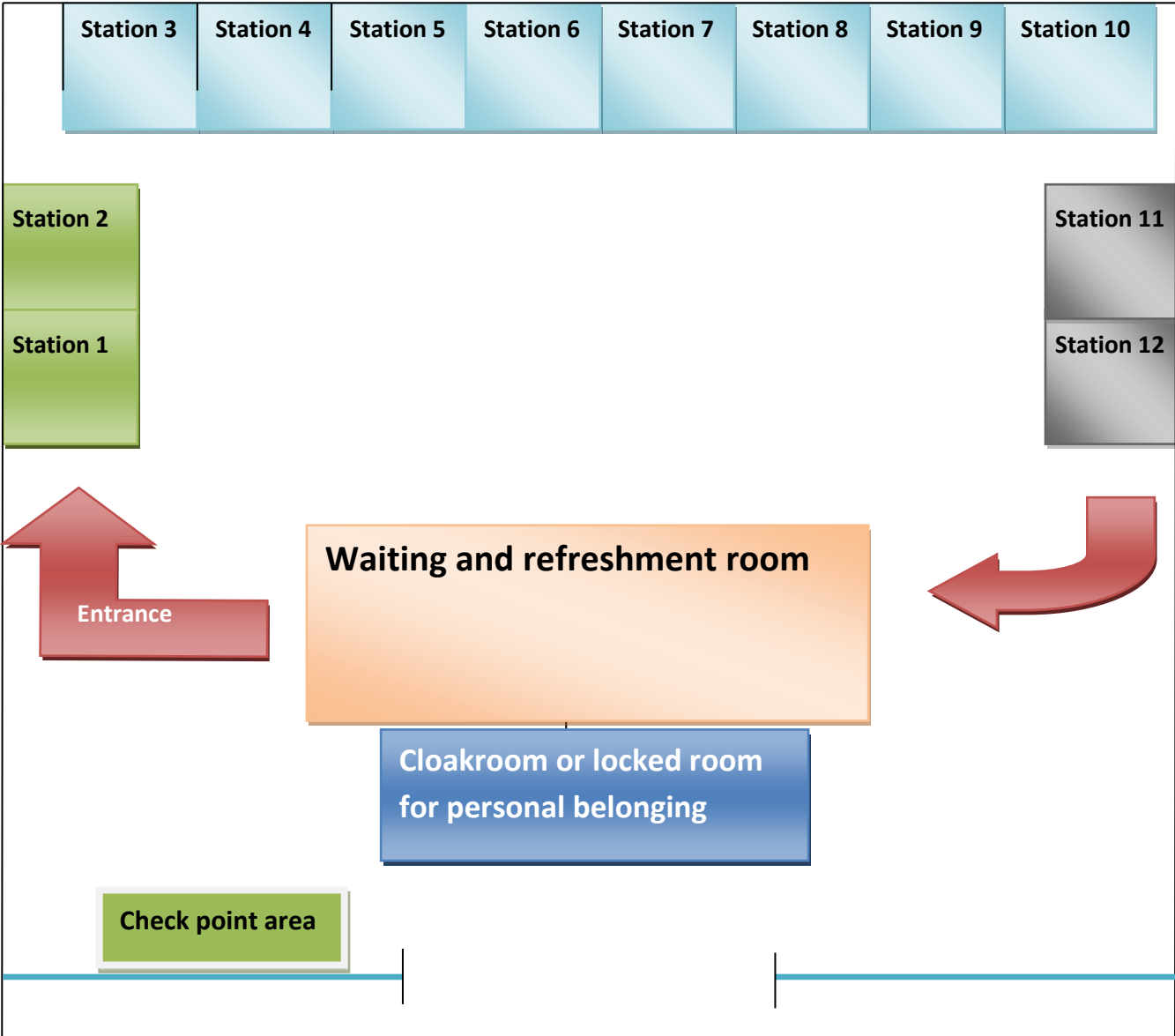
Annex VI. Candidate Comment Form

Ministry of Health
Health professionals' competency assessment and licensure Examination

Candidate Comment Form

Name of candidate:	Date:
Sex:	
Professional category:	
Exam center:	
General comment from construction of the exam, difficulty level, examiners	
Specific comment of questions:	

Annex VII: Assessment flow



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