

Recent CLEAR Quick Poll Results

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CLEAR periodically issues “Quick Poll” surveys asking members about their credentialing practices, policies, and issues. These Quick Polls are not designed as scientific studies but allow us to gather snapshot data regarding current practices in credentialing. Here are the results of several Quick Polls from mid- to late-2019 and early 2020.

Questions for Regulators

Question: *What is one question about testing that you are asked as a regulator for which you would like a straightforward, ready response?*

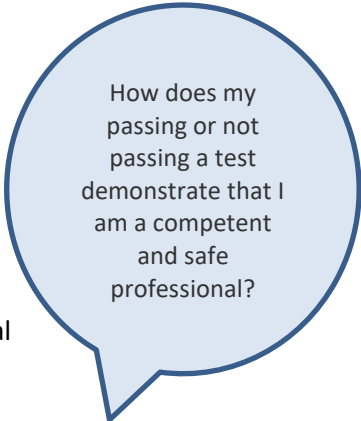
Number of responses: 29

Results:

This poll provided a single open-ended response field wherein participants wrote the question they are asked for which they wanted to have a ready reply. Their responses have been categorized into major topic areas related to various facets of their examination programs. The topics range from the purpose and validity of the exam program, to the measurement of proficiency and the meaning of competence, to questions about exam results and scoring, and to logistics relating to exam administration. Regulators would be well served to have considered these types of questions so that they have thoughtful and accurate responses to these and similar inquiries from candidates, boards, and the general public.

The topic areas of questions posed to regulators are listed below, along with a some verbatim as well as paraphrased representative responses.

- **Purpose of the exam program**
 - How do you know the exam questions are appropriate for the profession and what does proficiency look like?
 - Why do I have to do this when I have the required degree?
 - Is it appropriate for the professional society to set the competency profile for the profession, create and administer the entry-to-practice exam without the regulators direct input?
 - What is a better indicator of showing ability to teach, a special or focused examination or 5 years of experience teaching the same subject matter in another state?
- **Validity of the exam**
 - How do you know the exam is valid?
 - How do you ensure that all candidates sitting your tests on different days are all being tested against the same framework?
 - Why do you rely on multiple choice tests?
- **Passing point and scoring**
 - Why can't [organization] just use 70% as the cut point?



- Why as a regulator do you use non-compensatory scoring for your knowledge exam?
- How come the failure rate is so high?
- **Exam results**
 - Why can't I have full answers so I can understand where I went wrong?
 - Why can't you give at least general feedback about my performance?
 - Why do some of our best students fail the entry to practice exam?
- **Who is taking the test and how are they performing?**
 - Will you release pass/fail data in aggregate by race/ethnicity?
 - Will you test the sample and let us know everything that is in it?
- **Exam policies, procedures, and logistics**
 - Do you accept tests from another state?
 - Is it prudent for all credentialing agencies (licensure and certification) to abandon in-person proctoring/supervision and the environmental controls of a fixed test administration location in favor of the remote proctoring of tests?
 - Why does it cost applicants so much?
 - Why can't licensing exams be offered in many different language given the influx of non-English speaking candidates from other countries?
 - What are the pitfalls to allowing ELL candidates "special arrangements" (typically time) to take exams that are only available in English?
 - [What is policy on] Retention of the investigator's notes?



Digital Badges

Question: *Has your program received requests to offer digital badges? (Y/N)*

Does your program see utility in offering digital badges to those who earn certifications or licenses? (Y/N)

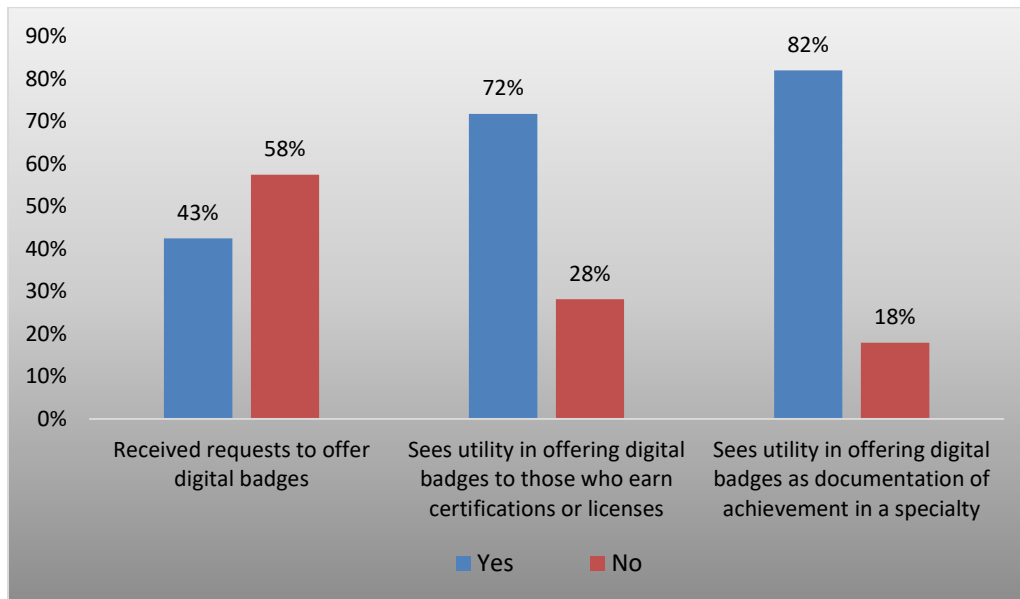
Does your program see utility in offering digital badges as documentation of achievement in a specialty? (Y/N)

Number of responses: 40

Results:

Digital badging to serve as an electronic method for sharing information about credential attainment is a hot topic in the credentialing world. Among the 40 individuals who responded to this poll, it is therefore somewhat surprising that fewer than half (43%) indicated that their program had actually received requests to offer digital badges, while 58% had not received such requests (percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding). A possible explanation may be that the concept of digital badges is not yet as widely accepted in licensure as it is in the world of voluntary credentialing, although we do not have definitive information on what types of organizations (licensure or voluntary certification) are represented among respondents.

One the other hand, the programs that responded indicate that they see utility in offering digital badges those earning certifications or licenses (72% in the affirmative) and/or see utility in offering digital badges as documentation of achievement in a specialty (82% in the affirmative).



Lowest Volume Exam Programs

Question: *What is the annual total candidate volume of your lowest-volume examination?*

Do you take any of the following steps to evaluate the reliability and defensibility of your lowest-volume exam program? (Check all that apply.)

- Combine stats from different administrations to increase number of respondents for item analysis, etc.*
- Use more conservative item review criteria (e.g. review items with less than 50% correct rather than items with less than 30% correct)*
- Do not know/Unsure*
- Other*

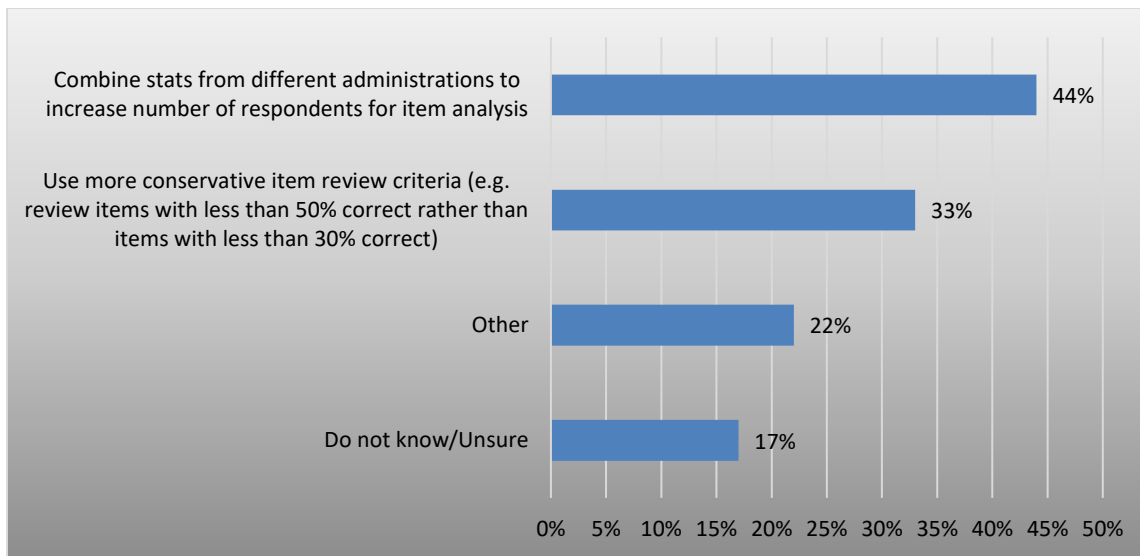
Number of responses: 18

Results:

Respondents to this poll represented a wide range of annual candidate volumes; the average annual number of candidates was 312, with the smallest program having a 2 candidates and the largest program having 1,718 candidates. In fact, three of the 18 programs that provided information tested on average more than 1,000 candidates per year. Candidate volume data was grouped into ranges and the frequency distribution of the responses is provided in the table below. Ten organizations had 100 or fewer candidates annually, five had from 101 to 250 candidates, and three had more than 1,000 candidates annually.

Annual candidate volume	N	%
1 to 25	5	28%
26 to 50	3	17%
51 to 100	2	11%
101 to 250	5	28%
251 to 1000	0	0%
1001 to 2000	3	17%
Total	18	100%

Respondents were asked what steps they took to evaluate the reliability and defensibility of their lowest volume exams; multiple responses were permitted so totals exceed 100%. The most common step taken (by 47% of respondents) is to combine statistics from multiple exam administrations for purposes of item analysis. One third of respondents (33%) indicated they are more conservative in their approach to reviewing items, and 22% used some other method. Seventeen percent (3 respondents) did not know what methods their organizations used to ensure reliability and defensibility. An exploration of whether there were differences in the types of steps taken to ensure reliability between the 10 smallest programs (those with an annual volume 100 or fewer candidates) and the eight somewhat larger programs (those with an annual volume more than 100 candidates) found that the types of steps taken were comparable.



Of those programs indicating they used some other method to ensure reliability, two were relatively larger organizations (with annual candidate volumes of 125 and 1,526) and they indicated they believed that they had sufficient candidate volume such that traditional methods such as Cronbach’s alpha, KR-20, and CSEM provided sufficient information. The two very small programs (with annual candidate volumes of 2 and 14) indicating using some other methods rely on historical item performance and greater scrutiny of item content. One of these respondents stated “It is not feasible to wait until item statistics are available to put an exam into place in most cases...it is better to risk having some unknowns in the process than to leave no safeguards at all for the general public.”

Open Book Exam

Question: Does your organization offer an "open book" examination as part of its certification program? By "open book" we mean that examinees have access to printed or electronic reference resources while taking the exam. Select all that apply.

- Yes, for initial certification
- Yes, for recertification or revalidation
- No

Which industry BEST characterizes your organization's credential(s)?

- Agriculture, Forestry, or Fishing
- Construction, Engineering, or Architecture
- Healthcare
- Education
- Transportation, Communications, or Utilities
- Finance, Insurance, or Real Estate
- Other (please specify)

In what jurisdiction(s) is/are your examinations offered? Select all that apply.

- USA
- Canada
- Europe
- Australia/New Zealand
- Other (please specify)

Those respondents indicating they offered an open book exam for one or more purposes were asked the following series of questions.

In what type of testing environment is your exam administered? Select all that apply.

- Secure onsite testing location (including test centers or event testing)
- Secure online environment, including remote or "anywhere proctored"
- Unproctored e-learning environment
- Other (please specify)

Do examinees bring their own materials to the test site? Select one.

- Yes. Examinees are required to bring their own materials.
- No. Test sites provide examinees with materials.
- Other (please specify)

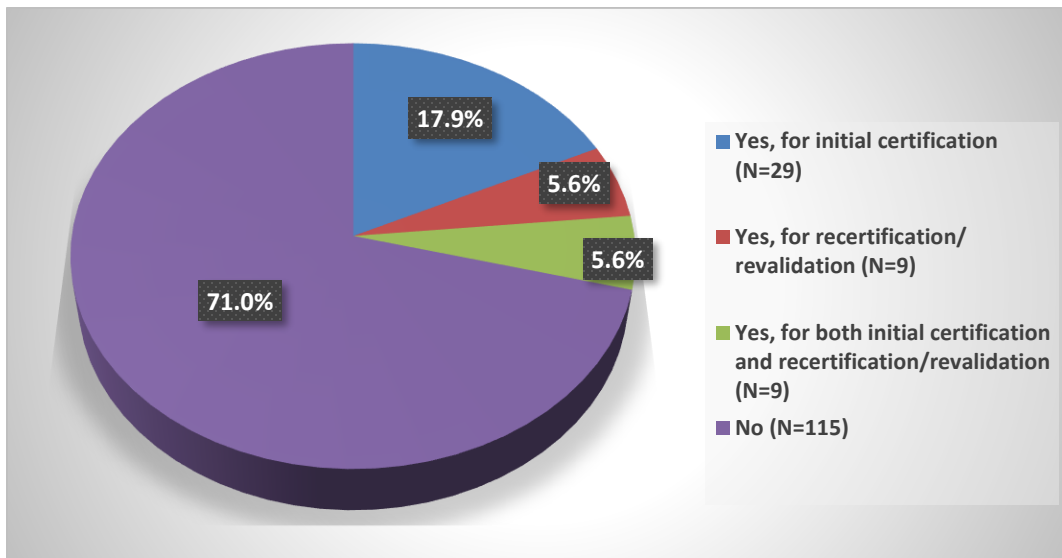
Do examinees have access to all resources or a selected set of resource materials relevant to the examination? Select one.

- Yes
- No

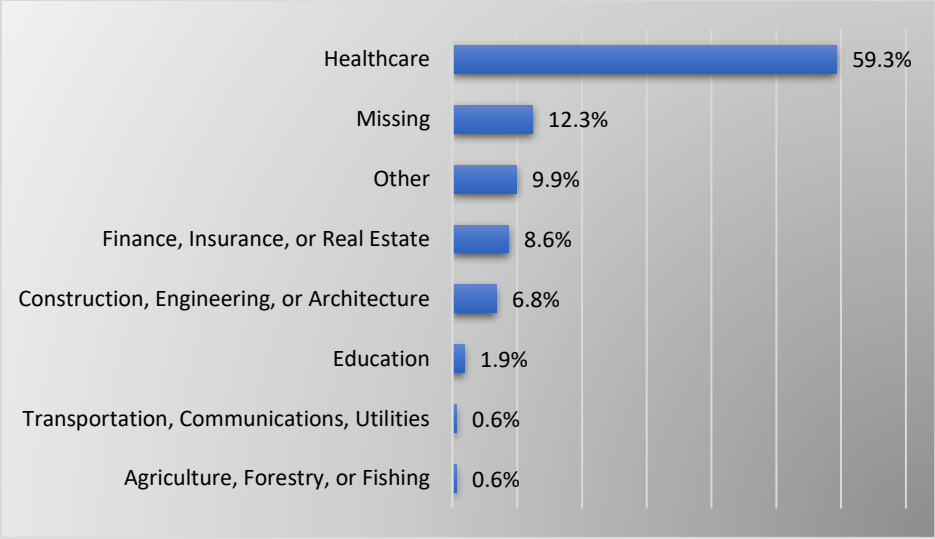
Are test questions focused on retrieving information from the "open book materials," or are they focused on applying information to answer questions requiring higher order thinking?

Number of responses: Ranged from 162 (the total who entered the survey and answered initial question) to 28 (for one of the followup questions answered by respondents offering open book exams).
Results:

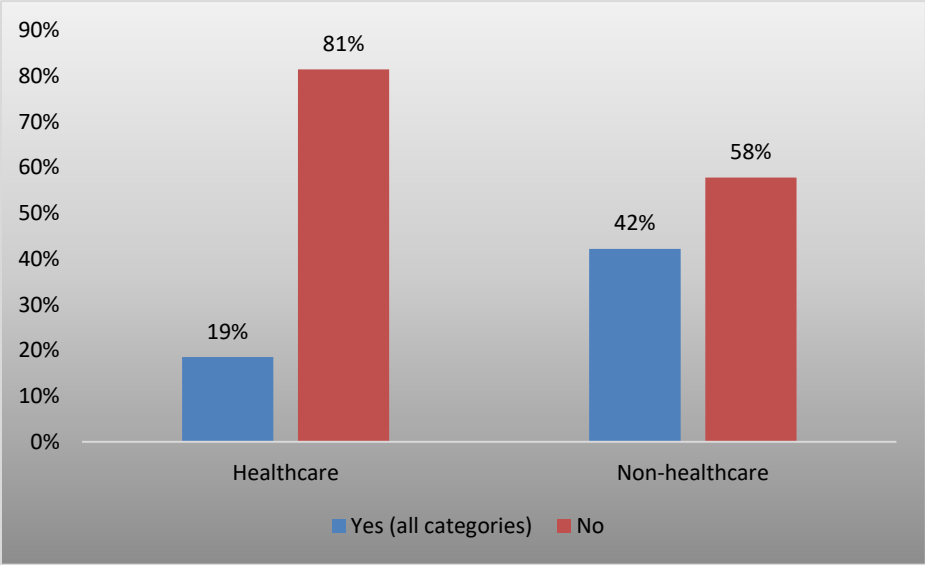
Forty-seven respondents (29%) offer some form of open book exam, including 29 (18%) who offer an open book exam for purposes of initial certification; and nine each (~6%) who offer an open book exam for recertification/revalidation or offer an open book exam for *both* initial certification and recertification/revalidation. One hundred fifteen programs (71%) do not offer any type of open book exam.



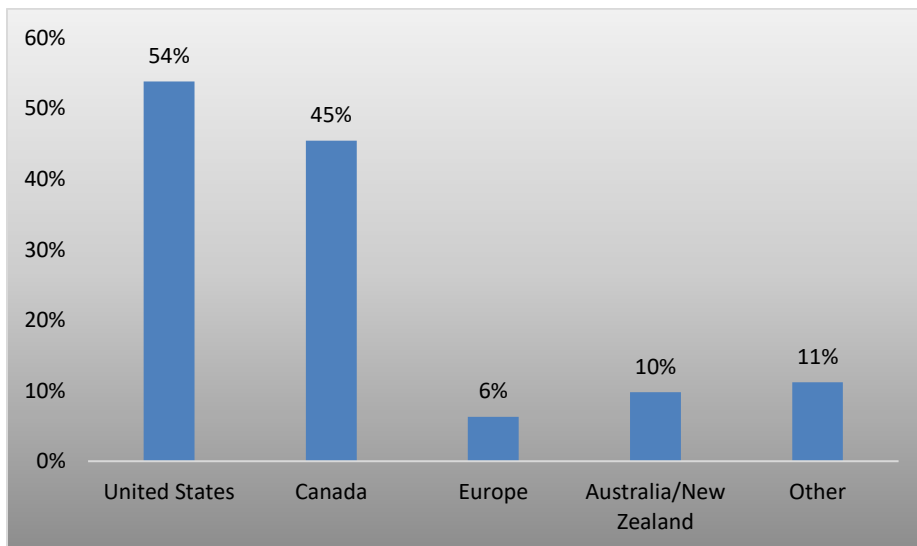
Respondents offer credentials related to a range of industries, with healthcare representing the largest cohort (N=96, or almost 60%). Of those choosing from the answer options, Finance, Insurance, or Real Estate was next most commonly selected (N=14, or 9%), followed by Construction, Engineering, or Architecture (N=11, or 7%). Twelve percent of respondents (N=20) skipped this question, and 10% (N=16) wrote in some *Other* industry, for which they provided write-in responses. These included Funeral (N=3), Human Resources (N=3), Legal (N=2), and a variety of other industries.



After a review of the write-in responses to the *Other* option, respondents were categorized as to whether they provided healthcare-related credentials or nonhealthcare-related credentials. Overall, 97 respondents (60%) offered healthcare-related credentials, 45 respondents (28%) offered nonhealthcare-related credentials, and 20 respondents (12%) had missing data. Analysis of whether organizations offer open book exams by whether they are in healthcare versus nonhealthcare-related fields found stark differences. Organizations with healthcare-related credentials were much less likely to offer any type of open book exams than were organizations with nonhealthcare-related credentials (19% versus 42%, respectively).

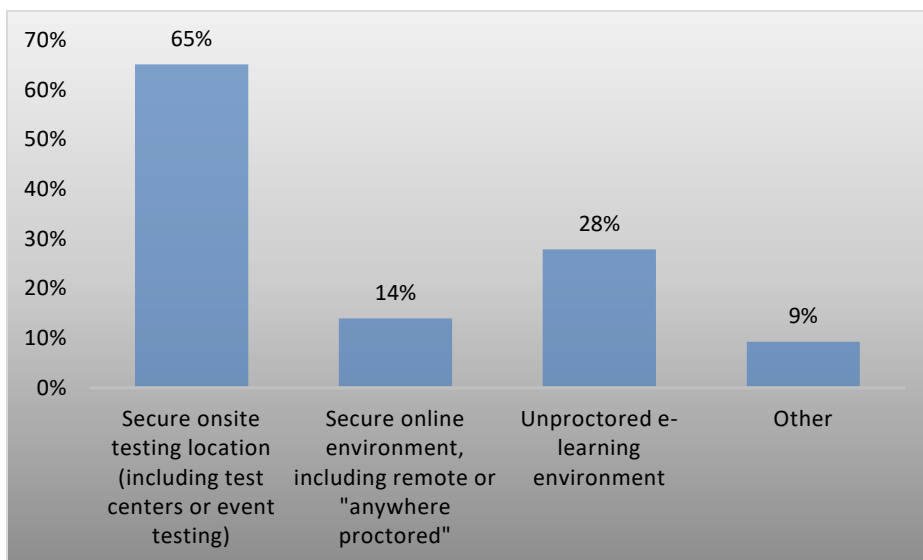


Respondents represented a wide range of jurisdictions. More than half operate in the United States (54%), while just under half (45%) operate in Canada, with 10% in Australia/New Zealand, 6% in Europe, and 10% in other jurisdictions (respondents could select all jurisdictions in which they operate). Of those selecting *Other*, the most common write-in responses were global, international, multiple countries, Asia, and specific US states.

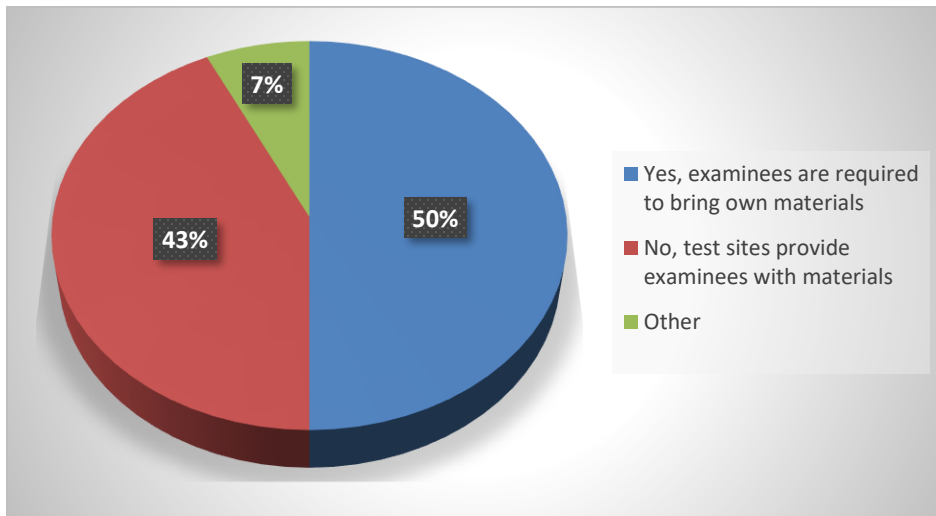


Respondents indicating they offered open book exams for initial certification, recertification/revalidation, or both, were asked a series of followup questions.

Forty-three respondents answered the question about the environment in which their open-book exams were administered (Note: multiple responses were permitted). The most frequently selected option was in a secure onsite testing location (65%) followed by an unproctored e-learning environment (28%) and a secure online environment (14%); 9% selected some other environment. Representative examples of write-in responses include instructor-led classroom and online unproctored.

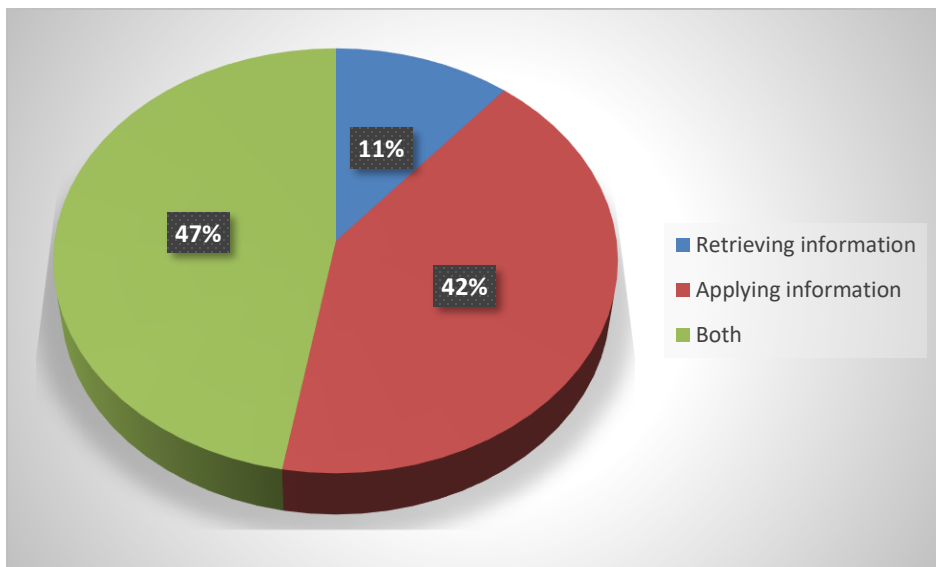


Twenty-eight respondents answered a question about the types of materials provided in the open book environment. In half the cases, examinees were required to bring their own materials and in 43% percent of the cases the test site provided examinees with materials.



Regarding access to resources (answered by 38 respondents), two thirds (N= 25, or 66%) had access to selected resources and one third (N=13, or 34%) had unlimited access, including to internet resources.

Thirty-eight organizations provided responses to a question about the focus of their open book exams. Nearly half (47%) indicated that questions focused on both retrieving and applying information, while 42% indicated that questions focused on applying information and 11% indicated that questions focused on retrieving information.



The results of these snapshots of licensure and certification practice provided in the quick polls offers fascinating insights into how organizations are operating in today’s world. CLEAR thanks those organizations that have participated in these polls and urges its members to respond to upcoming quick polls on **XXX, YYY, and ZZZ. ←Do we know what any upcoming polls will be about?**