

PCOA Results Show Pharmacy Students' Knowledge Levels as They Develop Over Program Years

Pharmacy Curriculum Outcomes Assessment® (PCOA®) results continue to show how students build knowledge as they advance through pharmacy school. PCOA score results provide valuable information about students' knowledge in subject matter representative of United States doctor of pharmacy program curricula. The PCOA is the only independent, objective, and national assessment that enables schools and colleges of pharmacy to measure their students' knowledge in pharmacy curricula and compare their results to previous years and other peer programs throughout the US.

Scores Increase as Students Advance

PCOA results show that scores generally increase gradually as students advance from the first year through the final year of their professional curriculum. This progression is evidence that PCOA results measure the expected increase in students' knowledge in US pharmacy school curricula.

Figure A on this page shows the overall mean scaled scores for students testing in 2015-2018.

The development and retention of student knowledge is also observed over the four content areas of the assessment, which are basic biomedical sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, social/behavioral/administrative pharmacy sciences, and clinical sciences. For example, PCOA data show that P1 students score higher in basic biomedical sciences than in clinical sciences. This is attributed to the fact that many pharmacy students have previously studied basic biomedical sciences, which are common prerequisites for entering pharmacy school, while many students do not gain clinical science experience until they begin their doctor of pharmacy program. This is evidenced in PCOA results, which show that P3 and P4 students score higher in the more specialized content areas, such as clinical sciences and social/behavioral/administrative pharmacy sciences.

Figure B on page 12 illustrates the progression and retention of student knowledge over the four content areas.

NABP surveys the schools and colleges of pharmacy after each testing window to gather information regarding their experiences and to create a dialogue regarding program improvement. The PCOA is administered five times each calendar year.

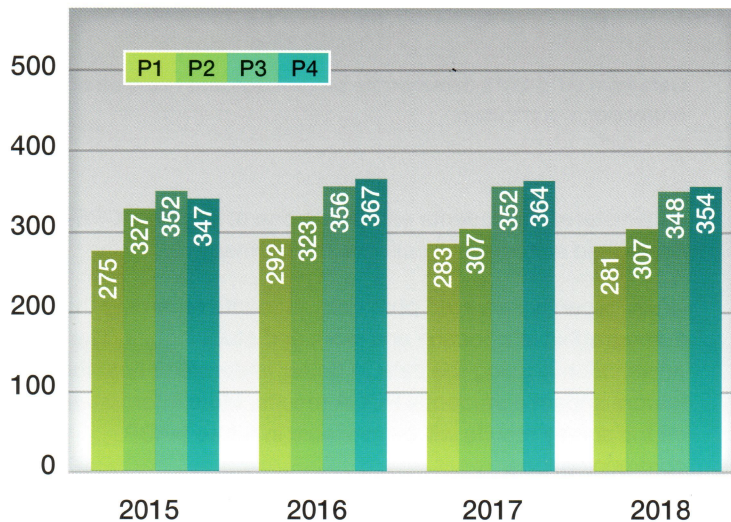
As part of a school or college of pharmacy's efforts in student and curricular strategies assessment, the PCOA may also be used to:

- evaluate educational objectives;
- measure the overall performance of pharmacy students and compare their scores to a representative national sample;
- evaluate student progress in the curriculum when used with classroom assessment, portfolios, etc;
- track scores from year to year in order to monitor student growth;
- review student performance after curricula have been modified or updated; and
- conduct educational research.

Since 2016, the PCOA has been a requirement for individuals nearing the completion of their didactic curriculum to meet Standard 24: Assessment Elements of the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Accreditation Standards and Key Elements for the Professional Program in Pharmacy Leading to the Doctor of Pharmacy Degree. In 2018, there were 19,887 PCOA exams

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Figure A. Overall Mean Scaled Scores for All Students Testing in 2015-2018

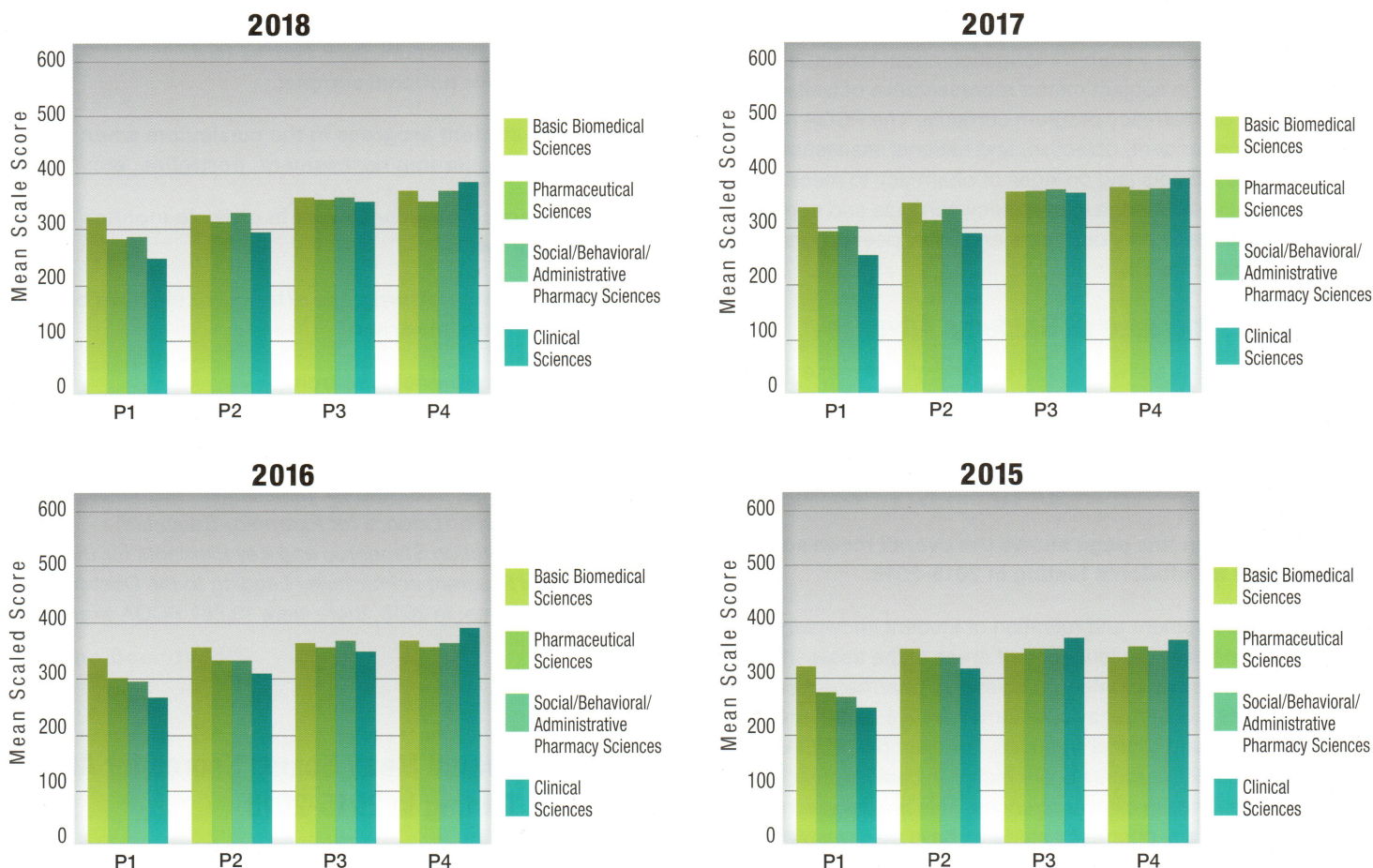


Data from 2015-2018 indicate that there is a progression of student scores from across program years P1 through P4. The number of P1-P4 students taking the PCOA each year is shown.

PCOA Data

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Figure B. Progression and Retention of Knowledge From 2015-2018



Data from 2015-2018 demonstrate progression and retention of knowledge in the four core competency areas as students progress through the professional curriculum.

administered to students enrolled in one of the 137 ACPE-accredited schools and colleges of pharmacy.

NABP recently surveyed pharmacy students regarding their demographic information and work and study habits. The Association is using the data to better understand how these factors impact a student's PCOA results. More information on the survey results will be available in future NABP communications.

In 2018, NABP successfully transitioned the registration process for the PCOA to the Association's new online system. It was a seamless transition and did not cause any disruption in providing test scores. The goal for the PCOA is to eventually create a process that is completely paperless and more streamlined for the students and schools.

More information about the PCOA, including the updated PCOA Administration Highlights document that provides additional PCOA data, is available in the Programs section of the NABP website at www.nabp.pharmacy.

Change Is Under Way for the PCOA Testing Process

In response to feedback received by the schools and colleges of pharmacy, NABP will be updating to a new test delivery system for the PCOA. The new system will provide more features and an improved test-taking experience for students. More information will be provided in future NABP communications. ■