

Tips to Succeed at BOABC Examinations

The following are helpful hints on how to succeed on examinations, based on research and analysis of BOABC open-book, multiple-choice examinations.

- Exam candidates should study the topics of the Examination Content Outlines found on the boabc.org website. There is one content outline for each examination. These outlines are a breakdown of the concepts and terms to be tested for each exam. It also provides the number of questions in each area to be tested. The more questions in a content area, the more heavily this section is weighted in scoring.

- In the Level Two Exam, for example, the section on Fire Protection [Spatial Separations, Fire Walls, etc.] is one of the most challenging content areas. It contains 25 questions and is the largest content area in the exam. The overwhelming numbers of examination candidates who do not succeed in the Level Two exam have had poor results in answering questions in the Fire Protection content area.

- All BOABC exams are developed by the Association's Examination Committee and are processed by the International Code Council [ICC]. The exams are structured so that an examination candidate, with thorough knowledge of the Building Code in the area to be tested, should be able to complete the exam in the allotted time. A successful exam candidate can answer approximately 25% or more of the questions without having to look up the answer by navigating through the Building Code manual. Exam candidates who have to search in the Building Code for each answer will have difficulty completing an exam in the time allotted; especially if they also have difficulty navigating through the Building Code in search of a solution.

- Each person has his or her own method for preparing for an exam. One successful study plan approach is to prepare a study schedule approximately three months before an exam sitting. By studying the exam Content Outlines three times a week for a total of 7 to 8 hours per week and carefully learning any concept or term in the Building Code, which is unfamiliar, there will be a high probability of success. [This is around 100 hours of preparation].

- One of the characteristics of successful exam candidates is to have a thorough knowledge of the code, often acquired by experience as a plans examiner. In the Level One Exam and in the Level Three Exam #8, for example, a significant part of each of these exams includes questions related to a Plan Review as part of the test. Those exam candidates who are weak in plan review skills have difficulty in passing the Level One and the Level Three Examination #8.

- Those persons who are relying primarily on work experience acquired in the building trades to pass examinations are often challenged to succeed at BOABC examinations. Whereas, those examination candidates who have taken Building Code related courses and have experience working as an Architectural Technologist, or in a local authority building department, have a higher degree of success in taking BOABC examinations.

- In conclusion, each person is unique in experience, training and motivation, so it is difficult to generalize how a person will succeed in a BOABC examination. It is not unusual for many BOABC examination candidates to take two or more attempts to successfully complete an examination.

Characteristics, such as a commitment to life-long learning, steadfast pursuit of a goal, and a desire to acquire new skills and knowledge are important personal qualities for succeeding on BOABC examinations and for being a successful Building Official.

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