

# PATHOLOGISTS' ASSISTANT, PA(ASCP) EXAMINATION CONTENT GUIDELINE & OUTLINE

# **EXAMINATION CONTENT GUIDELINE**

#### **EXAMINATION MODEL**

The PA(ASCP) certification examination is composed of 100 examination questions given in a 2 hour 30 minute time frame. All examination questions are multiple-choice with one best answer. The PA(ASCP) certification examination is administered using the format of computer adaptive testing (CAT).

With CAT, when a person answers a question correctly, the next test question has a slightly higher level of difficulty. The difficulty level of the questions presented to the examinee continues to increase until a question is answered incorrectly. Then a slightly easier question is presented. In this way, the test is tailored to the individual's ability level.

Each question in the test bank is calibrated for level of difficulty and is assigned a content area that matches with the subtest area of the content outline for a particular examination. The weight (value) given to each question is determined by the level of difficulty. Therefore, the examinee must answer enough difficult questions to achieve a score above the pass point in order to successfully pass the certification examination.

#### **EXAMINATION SUBTESTS**

The PA(ASCP) certification examination questions encompass five different subtests within the area of Pathology: Fundamentals of Pathology, Anatomic Pathology Techniques, Anatomy, Autopsy Pathology, and Laboratory Operations. Each of these subtests comprises a specific percentage of the overall 100-question certification examination. The subtests for the PA examination are described in the following table:

| SUBTESTS                           | DESCRIPTION   | EXAM PERCENTAGES |
|------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Fundamentals of Pathology<br>(FP)  | Applications of Pathology and Disease States  | 40-50%           |
| Anatomic Pathology Techniques (AT) | Principles and techniques related to autopsy pathology, surgical pathology, and histological techniques | 10-15%           |
| Anatomy<br>(AN)                    | Normal Microscopic Anatomy;<br>Gross Anatomy  | 10-15%           |
| Autopsy Pathology<br>(AP)          | Basic principles and techniques of adult,<br>neonatal/perinatal, pediatric, and<br>medicolegal/forensic | 10-15%           |
| Laboratory Operations (LO)         | Regulatory and Compliance, Management,<br>Safety and Infection Control                                  | 5-10%            |

For a more specific overview of the five subtest areas on the PA(ASCP) certification examination, please refer to the **CONTENT OUTLINE** on page 2.

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# PATHOLOGISTS' ASSISTANT

Examination questions, which are related to the subtest areas outlined below, will be both theoretical and procedural. Theoretical questions measure skills necessary to apply knowledge of pathology/histology, identify/evaluate morphological characteristics of disease, and correlate pathologic findings to physiologic/disease processes. Procedural questions measure skills necessary to select/perform appropriate laboratory techniques, evaluate laboratory data, and follow quality assurance protocols.

## I. Fundamentals of Pathology (40 – 50%)

# A. General Pathology

- 1. Cell Injury
- 2. Environmental, Toxic and Nutritional
- 3. Fluid and Hemodynamic Derangements
- 4. Genetic and Metabolic Disorders
- 5. Immunopathology
- 6. Infectious Diseases
- 7. Neoplasia

#### B. Systemic Pathology

- 1. Blood and Lymphoid
- 2. Bone and Soft Tissue
- 3. Breast
- 4. Cardiovascular
- 5. Endocrine
- 6. Gastrointestinal
- 7. Kidney and Urinary Tract
- 8. Liver and Biliary Tract
- 9. Nervous System
- 10. Pediatric
- 11. Perinatal
- 12. Reproductive Female
- 13. Reproductive Male
- 14. Respiratory
- 15. Skin

# II. Anatomic Pathology Techniques (10 – 15%)

- A. Autopsy Pathology Techniques
- B. Histological Techniques
- C. Surgical Pathology Techniques

# III. Anatomy (10 – 15%)

- A. Gross
- B. Normal Microscopic

# IV. Autopsy Pathology (10 – 15%)

- A. Adult
- B. Neonatal/perinatal
- C. Pediatric
- D. Medicolegal/forensic

## V. Laboratory Operations (5 - 10%)

- A. Regulatory and Compliance
  - 1. Governmental agencies (e.g., CLIA, HIPAA)
  - 2. Laboratory accreditation (e.g. CAP, The Joint Commission)

- 3. Coding (e.g., SNOMED, CPT)
- B. Management
  - 1. Personnel
  - 2. Financial
  - 3. Work flow, scheduling and productivity
  - 4. Education/Training
- C. Safety and Infection Control (e.g., OSHA, MSDS, NFPA)

All Board of Certification examinations use conventional units for results and reference ranges.

#### **END OF CONTENT GUIDELINE**