

PATHOLOGISTS' ASSISTANT, PA(ASCP) EXAMINATION CONTENT GUIDELINE

This document should serve as a useful guide for examination preparation. The Board of Certification criterion-referenced examinations are constructed to measure the competencies described in the Certification Levels Definitions. These competency statements are specified into task definitions, linked to the content outline, and measured by the test items.

SKILLS RELATED TO PATHOLOGISTS' ASSISTANT

Knowledge

The Pathologists' Assistant has knowledge and theory of pathologic disease processes, gross and microscopic anatomy, and procedural skills and laboratory tests which relate to the fields of surgical and autopsy pathology.

Technical Skills

The Pathologists' Assistant is able to perform surgical pathology and autopsy pathology gross examinations and appropriate equipment utilization and maintenance. The Pathologists' Assistant has the knowledge, ability and technical skills to demonstrate gross pathology in surgical pathology specimens, prosect and demonstrate gross pathology in autopsy cases to also include the procurement of tissues for research, tissue banking, or other specialized studies as necessary.

Judgment and Analytical Decision-making

The Pathologists' Assistant is capable of exercising independent judgment in problem solving. The Pathologists' Assistant is able to anticipate and respond to all types of surgical pathology specimens and autopsy cases, with respect to selecting appropriate tissues reflective of the clinical history, for and under the direction of the pathologist. The Pathologists' Assistant can participate in policy decisions affecting performance or personnel.

Communication

The Pathologists' Assistant is able to effectively communicate in depth with the supervising pathologist, other health care personnel and patients concerning the policies and operation of the anatomic pathology laboratory.

Supervision and Management

The Pathologists' Assistant is capable of performing and directing administrative functions in the overall operation of the anatomic pathology laboratory. Implicit is having the management skills to supervise other pathologists' assistants, and technical and clerical personnel where appropriate.

Teaching and Training Responsibilities

The Pathologists' Assistant has the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate effective educational and training programs.

THE EXAMINATION MODEL

The Board of Certification criterion-referenced examination model consists of three interrelated components:

COMPETENCY STATEMENTS describe the requisite skills and tasks performed and measured on the examination.

CONTENT OUTLINE delineates general categories or subtest areas of the examination.

TAXONOMY levels describe the cognitive skills required to answer the question.

Level 1 - Recall:	Ability to recall or recognize previously learned (memorized) knowledge ranging from specific facts to complete theories.
Level 2 - Interpretive Skills:	Ability to utilize recalled knowledge to interpret or apply verbal, numeric or visual data.
Level 3 - Problem Solving:	Ability to utilize recalled knowledge and interpretation/application of distinct criteria to resolve a problem or situation and/or make an appropriate decision.

EXAMINATION REPORTING MECHANISMS

After the examination has been administered and scored, a report is sent to the examinee. The Examinee Performance Report provides the scaled score on the total examination and pass/fail status for all candidates.

In addition, failing candidates receive scaled scores for each subtest. This information may help the examinee identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in order to develop a study plan for future examinations. A total scaled score of 400 is required to pass the examination. The approximate subtest percentages for the Pathologists' Assistant examination are listed below:

SUBTEST	PA
General Pathology	10 – 20%
Systemic Pathology	40 – 50%
Anatomic Pathology Techniques	10 – 15%
Anatomy	10 – 15%
Autopsy Pathology	10 – 15%
Laboratory Operations	5 – 10%

COMPETENCY STATEMENTS PATHOLOGISTS' ASSISTANT

In regard to Surgical, Autopsy, General Pathology, and Laboratory Operations, the Pathologists' Assistant:

APPLIES KNOWLEDGE, THEORIES, AND PRINCIPLES OF

- gross anatomic description and dissection of human tissue specimens
- human postmortem examination
- anatomic pathology techniques
- anatomic structure and physiology
- embryologic origins including normal and abnormal anatomic structure
- normal and abnormal histology
- gross and microscopic photography
- standard and special laboratory procedures
- laboratory operations and management
- sources of error

IDENTIFIES

- appropriate specimen collection, labeling, and accessioning
- morphologic characteristics of disease versus normal processes
- legal authorization for autopsy
- appropriate billing codes
- application of special histologic stains
- sources of error

SELECTS

- prepares and submits appropriate gross tissue sections for frozen section, flow cytometry, light microscopy, electron microscopy, and immunofluorescent microscopy
- prepares and submits appropriate tissue for microbiological cultivation
- biologic specimens for research protocols and special studies
- standard operating procedures
- corrective actions
- instruments for processing of human tissue specimens

CORRELATES PATHOLOGIC FINDINGS WITH

- clinical history
- medical record
- imaging studies
- laboratory data
- normal physiologic and disease processes
- differential diagnosis

CONTENT OUTLINE PATHOLOGISTS' ASSISTANT

Refer to the Competency Statements for the competencies tested in each subtest.

- I. General Pathology (10 – 20%)**
 - A. Cell Injury
 - B. Environmental, Toxic and Nutritional
 - C. Fluid and Hemodynamic Derangements
 - D. Genetic and Metabolic Disorders
 - E. Immunopathology
 - F. Infectious Diseases
 - G. Neoplasia

- II. Systemic Pathology (40 – 50%)**
 - A. Blood and Lymphoid
 - B. Bone and Soft Tissue
 - C. Breast
 - D. Cardiovascular
 - E. Endocrine
 - F. Gastrointestinal
 - G. Kidney and Urinary Tract
 - H. Liver and Biliary Tract
 - I. Nervous System
 - J. Pediatric
 - K. Perinatal
 - L. Reproductive - Female
 - M. Reproductive - Male
 - N. Respiratory
 - O. Skin

- III. Anatomic Pathology Techniques (10 – 15%)**
 - A. Autopsy Pathology Techniques
 - B. Histological Techniques
 - C. Surgical Pathology Techniques

- IV. Anatomy (10 – 15%)**
 - A. Gross
 - B. Microscopic

- V. Autopsy Pathology (10 – 15%)**
 - A. General autopsy
 - B. CPC
 - C. Forensic

- VI. Laboratory Operations (5 – 10%)**
 - A. Informatics
 - B. Management
 - C. Regulatory
 - D. Safety

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

END OF CONTENT GUIDELINE