

Examination Model

The American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification (ASCP BOC) PBT certification examination is composed of 80 questions given in a 2-hour time frame. All examination questions are multiple-choice with one best answer. The examination is administered using the format of computer adaptive testing (CAT). More information is available on the ASCP BOC website.

The examination questions may be both theoretical and/or procedural. Theoretical questions measure skills necessary to apply knowledge. Procedural questions measure skills necessary to perform phlebotomy techniques and follow quality assurance protocols.

Examination Content Areas

The examination questions encompass the following content areas within phlebotomy. Each of these content areas comprises a specific percentage of the overall 80-question examination.

Content Area	Description	Examination Percentage
Circulatory System	Structure and function of the circulatory system; composition/function of blood	5 – 10%
Specimen Collection	Review, clarification, and verification of orders; patient communication; patient identification; patient assessment and preparation; site selection; techniques; common tests; order of draw; complications and considerations; equipment	45 – 50%
Specimen Handling, Transport, and Processing	Specimen acceptability for testing (e.g., specimen type/quality, add-on testing); specimen accessioning/labeling; specimen centrifugation and aliquoting; specimen transport and storage	15 – 20%
Waived and Point-of-Care Testing (POCT)	Performance of rapid tests (e.g., urinalysis, hemoglobin and hematocrit, coagulation, glucose, kit tests); instrument operation, troubleshooting, maintenance, and quality control	5 – 10%
Non-Blood Specimens	Physiology; patient preparation and instruction; specimen collection; specimen processing and handling	5 – 10%
Laboratory Operations	Quality assurance; quality improvement; proficiency testing; competency assessment; interpersonal relations; professional ethics; laboratory regulations; safety regulations	15 – 20%

For a more detailed overview of the examination, refer to the content outline starting on page 2.

Examination Content Outline

- Regulatory questions on the examination are based on U.S. sources (e.g., AABB, FDA, CLIA, etc.).
- The examples provided in this content outline (as indicated by e.g.,) are not limited to those listed.
- The laboratory results and reference ranges on the examination will be provided in both conventional and SI units.

I. Circulatory System

5 – 10% of total examination

A. Structure and Function of the Circulatory System

1. Heart
2. Arteries
3. Veins
4. Capillaries

B. Composition/Function of Blood

1. Types of blood (venous, capillary, arterial)
2. Plasma
3. Serum
4. Cellular elements (RBC, WBC, platelets)

C. Terminology

II. Specimen Collection (Venipuncture, Skin Puncture)

45 – 50% of total examination

- A. Review, Clarification, and Verification of Orders
- B. Patient Communication (pre- and post-collection instructions, age-specific needs, special needs)
- C. Patient Identification
- D. Patient Assessment/Preparation
- E. Site Selection
- F. Techniques
- G. Common Tests
- H. Order of Draw
 1. Venous
 2. Capillary
- I. Complications and Considerations (e.g., fainting, edema, hematoma, IV, mastectomy)
- J. Equipment (e.g., tubes/anticoagulants, needles, tourniquet, lancets, syringes)
- K. Terminology

III. Specimen Handling, Transport, and Processing

15 – 20% of total examination

A. Assess Specimen Acceptability for Testing

1. Correct specimen type for test requested
2. Specimen quality (e.g., hemolysis, insufficient quantity, clotted sample)
3. Specimen acceptability for add-on tests
4. Special sample types (e.g., chain-of-custody, alcohol, forensic, newborn screening)

B. Specimen Accessioning and Labeling

C. Specimen Centrifugation and Aliquoting (e.g., pour-offs, pipetting)

D. Specimen Transport and Storage

1. Temperature
2. Light
3. Time
4. Pneumatic tube

E. Terminology

IV. Waived and Point-of-Care Testing (POCT)

5 – 10% of total examination

A. Test Performance

1. Urinalysis (e.g., dipstick)
2. Hemoglobin and Hematocrit
3. Coagulation (e.g., PT/INR)
4. Glucose
5. Kit Tests (e.g., Strep screen, rapid flu test, pregnancy test, COVID test)

B. Instrumentation

1. Operation and troubleshooting
2. Maintenance
3. Quality control (i.e., internal and external controls)

C. Terminology

V. Non-Blood Specimens

5 – 10% of total examination

A. Physiology

B. Patient Preparation and Instruction

1. Urine collections (e.g., random, clean-catch midstream, 24-hour)
2. Stool collections
3. Sputum

C. Specimen Collection

1. Throat swabs
2. Nasal/nasopharyngeal swabs
3. Breath testing (e.g., *H. pylori*, lactose)
4. Iontophoresis (sweat chloride)
5. Chain-of-custody

D. Processing and Handling

1. Specimen types and correlation with tests performed (e.g., urine, CSF, breath, stool, nasopharyngeal, sweat, semen, body fluids, sputum, buccal swabs)
2. Specimen acceptability for testing
3. Transport and storage (e.g., temperature, time, preservatives)

E. Terminology

VI. Laboratory Operations

15 – 20% of total examination

A. Quality Assurance

1. Techniques
2. Equipment

B. Quality Improvement (e.g., incident report/investigation, specimen errors, turnaround times)

C. Proficiency Testing and Competency Assessment

D. Interpersonal Relations (e.g., laboratory staff, other healthcare professionals)

E. Professional Ethics (e.g., patient confidentiality [HIPAA], types of consent, standard of care, malpractice, negligence)

F. Laboratory Regulations (e.g., ADA, CDC, CLIA, CMS)

1. Accreditation (e.g., CAP)
2. Specimen collection (e.g., CLSI, TJC)
3. Specimen shipping (e.g., DOT, IATA, Category A and B)
4. Coding/billing (e.g., ICD coding, ABN, test complexity)

G. Safety Regulations (e.g., OSHA, NFPA)

1. Chemical safety practices (e.g., SDS, chemical labeling, health hazards)
2. Fire safety practices (e.g., response protocols, classes of fire, fire safety equipment)
3. Radiation safety practices (e.g., labeling)
4. Infection control
 - a. Routes of transmission including reservoirs and vectors
 - b. Standard Precautions
 - c. Patient isolation
 - d. Signs and labels
 - e. Disinfection and decontamination
 - f. Hand hygiene
 - g. Personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - h. Sharps safety

H. Terminology

END OF CONTENT GUIDELINE