

## **PATHOLOGISTS' ASSISTANT, PA(ASCP)**

### **EXAMINATION CONTENT GUIDELINE**

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#### **EXAMINATION MODEL**

The PA(ASCP) certification examination is composed of 100 questions given in a 2 hour 30 minute time frame. All exam questions are multiple-choice with one best answer. The certification exam 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 classified by content area. The content area aligns with the examination specific content outline. The examinee must answer enough questions correctly to achieve a measure above the pass point in order to successfully pass the certification examination. There is no set number of questions one must answer to pass, nor is there a set percentage one must achieve to pass. If at the end of the exam the examinee's score is above the pass point, then he or she passes the exam.

#### **EXAMINATION CONTENT AREAS**

The PA exam questions encompass the following content areas within Pathology: Fundamentals of Pathology, Anatomic Pathology Techniques, Anatomy, Autopsy Pathology, and Laboratory Operations. Each of these content areas comprises a specific percentage of the overall 100-question exam. The content areas and percentages are described below:

| <b>CONTENT AREAS</b>                 | <b>DESCRIPTION</b>   | <b>EXAM PERCENTAGES</b> |
|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <b>FUNDAMENTALS OF PATHOLOGY</b>     | General Pathology and Systemic Pathology                             | <b>40 – 50%</b>         |
| <b>ANATOMIC PATHOLOGY TECHNIQUES</b> | Autopsy Pathology, Surgical Pathology, and Histological Techniques   | <b>10 – 15%</b>         |
| <b>ANATOMY</b>                       | Normal Microscopic Anatomy and Gross Anatomy                         | <b>10 – 15%</b>         |
| <b>AUTOPSY PATHOLOGY</b>             | Adult, Neonatal/Perinatal, Pediatric, and Medicolegal/Forensic       | <b>10 – 15%</b>         |
| <b>LABORATORY OPERATIONS</b>         | Regulatory and Compliance, Management, Safety, and Infection Control | <b>5 – 10%</b>          |

For a more specific overview of the PA exam, please refer to the **CONTENT OUTLINE** starting on page 2.

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### **EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE**

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**IMPORTANT:** Examination questions, which are related to the subtest areas outlined below, may be both theoretical and/or 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 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., CPT)

##### **B. Management**

1. Personnel
2. Work flow, scheduling and productivity
3. Education/training

##### **C. Safety and Infection Control (e.g., OSHA, SDS, NFPA)**

**Examples provided (as indicated by e.g.) are not limited to those listed.**

**All Board of Certification examinations use conventional and SI units for results and reference intervals.**

**END OF CONTENT GUIDELINE**