



# American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

A Member Board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS)

## Instructions for the Subspecialty Certification Examination in Addiction Psychiatry

### Examination Format

The computer-delivered Subspecialty Certification Examination in Addiction Psychiatry is comprised of three segments. At the beginning of the examination, there is a nondisclosure agreement (NDA) that examinees must agree to, followed by on-screen instructions. After the tutorial/instructions, the examination delivers 220 test questions in four sections. At the conclusion of the examination, there is a five-minute end-of-examination survey.

The total testing time is 240 minutes (4 hours). It includes five minutes for the NDA and on-screen tutorial/instructions, 230 minutes (3 hours and 50 minutes) for the 220 test questions, and five minutes for the end-of-examination survey.

During the examination, there are optional breaks between each section. The optional breaks will be offered after one section is completed and before the next section starts. Examination time continues to run during optional breaks, so examinees must manage their own time. The Subspecialty Certification Examination in Addiction Psychiatry Format table below demonstrates the examination delivery structure.

### Subspecialty Certification Examination in Addiction Psychiatry Format

	Section	No. of Questions	Format
<b>5 min</b>	Nondisclosure Agreement		
	On-Screen Instructions		
<b>3 hours, 50 minutes</b>	1	55	Stand-alone
	Optional Break*		
	2	55	Stand-alone
	Optional Break*		
	3	55	Stand-alone
	Optional Break*		
<b>5 min</b>	4	55	Stand-alone
	End-of-Examination Survey		

\*A proctor must log examinees in after breaks. Examinees must be signed in and out each time they enter and leave the testing room.

### Question Type and Review

The Subspecialty Certification Examination in Addiction Psychiatry is comprised entirely of one-best-answer multiple-choice questions that can be flagged for review or skipped.

## **Patient Characteristics in Test Questions**

The ABPN certification examination questions are carefully designed to measure meaningful and plausible testing points (e.g., diagnosis, management, etc.), without the influence of assumptions, bias, or stereotypes. When examinees select the correct (keyed) response, they are given credit because they are demonstrating what the examination question is designed to measure. ABPN examination committees encourage thoughtful consideration of patient characteristics and strive to promote diversity and present patients who reflect the populations served by the examinees, while at the same time minimize the presence of patient characteristics that could potentially be associated with harmful patient stereotypes.

Many test questions in this examination contain descriptions of patients. Characteristics of a patient such as age, sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, native language, country of origin, and/or occupation are sometimes mentioned within case vignettes in test questions. Some patient characteristics may be important inputs into the diagnostic reasoning process, and inclusion of some characteristics may increase the clinical verisimilitude of the patient cases.

In the context of question creation, race is considered a social construct not linked to biology or susceptibility to disease. This is similarly true of ethnicity and culture, heritage, or even country of origin. Ancestry, if known, may be biologically important, and thus may be relevant to factors relating to health and disease. In addition, when and if these characteristics are included in questions, they should be considered based on patient self-report, not the assumption of the physician.

Based on the thinking above, some question stems can be brief, the reference to a patient can be general, and patient characteristics could be omitted unless directly relevant to the question at hand. On the other hand, if the question stem includes a portrayal of a specific patient (including vignettes for linked item sets), it is reasonable that, at the least, the patient's age and sex is included. Additional patient characteristics may be included for any of several reasons, including if they:

- are clinically relevant or could aid in distractor quality
- are necessary for the examinee to better understand the context in which the patient is being seen (i.e., the question would be unreasonably difficult if excluded)
- add to the overall exam-level representativeness of the referenced patient population
- increase the probability of detection, diagnosis, or recognition of an otherwise rare condition
- do not contain negative stereotypes

## **Scoring**

In addition to subtest scores, examinees will receive a total percent correct score (percentage of items answered correctly). An acceptable level of performance must be achieved on the total score to pass the examination. The standards are not norm-referenced; there is no predefined passing rate for any group of examinees.

Questions that may be included in the examination solely for research or pretesting purposes will not be included in the examinee's score.

No examinee is expected to obtain a perfect score. However, in the opinion of the ABPN, each examinee should have some degree of familiarity with the subject matter of each question. Even though the examinee may be in doubt about the correct answer to a particular question, he or she should answer every question. This will increase the likelihood that the examinee's examination score will reflect the breadth of his or her knowledge of the field. There is no penalty for guessing.

## **SUBSPECIALTY CERTIFICATION DEMONSTRATION EXAMINATION**

To familiarize examinees with the computer-based examination interface, functionalities, and types of questions that they will find on an operational examination, there is an online Subspecialty Certification Demonstration Examination that can be found on the ABPN website [here](#).

**NOTE: This is a close representation of an operational examination but not an operational examination itself. Examinees WILL NOT be able to review their answers or receive a score after they have completed the demonstration exam.**