



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION IN PSYCHIATRY

Beginning in 2017, the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc. (ABPN) issued two-dimensional content specifications for the psychiatry, neurology and child neurology certification examinations. Questions for the September 2021 psychiatry, neurology and child neurology certification examinations will conform to these content specifications.

Within the two-dimensional format, one dimension is comprised of disorders and topics while the other is comprised of competencies and mechanisms that cut across the various disorders of the first dimension. By design, the two dimensions are interrelated and not independent of each other. All of the questions on the examination will fall into one of the disorders/topics and will be aligned with a competency/mechanism. For example, an item on substance use could focus on treatment, or it could focus on systems-based practice.

The psychiatry, neurology and child neurology content specifications can be accessed from the [specialty certification section](#) of our website.

Candidates should use the detailed content specifications as a guide to prepare for a certification examination. Scores for these examinations will be reported in a standardized format rather than the previous percent correct format.

Starting in 2018, all future examinations given by the ABPN will gradually conform to the two-dimensional content specification.

The American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to serving the public interest and the professions of psychiatry and neurology by promoting excellence in practice through certification and continuing certification processes.

For more information, please contact us at questions@abpn.com or visit our website at www.abpn.com.



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION IN PSYCHIATRY 2021 Content Blueprint

Number of questions: 425		
Dimension 1		
Psychiatric Disorders and Topics		
01.	Developmental processes and development through the life cycle	2-4%
02.	Neurodevelopmental disorders	3-5%
03.	Substance-related and addictive disorders	7-11%
04.	Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders	8-12%
05.	Depressive disorders	8-12%
06.	Bipolar and related disorders	4-6%
07.	Anxiety disorders	7-9%
08.	Obsessive-compulsive and related disorders	2-4%
09.	Trauma- and stressor-related disorders	4-6%
10.	Dissociative disorders	1-2%
11.	Somatic symptom and related disorders	2-4%
12.	Eating disorders	2-4%
13.	Elimination disorders	1-2%
14.	Sleep-wake disorders	3-5%
15.	Sexual dysfunctions	1-3%
16.	Gender dysphoria	1-2%
17.	Disruptive, impulse-control, and conduct disorders	1-3%
18.	Personality disorders	5-7%
19.	Paraphilic disorders	1-2%
20.	Other conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention	1-3%
21.	Neurocognitive disorders	6-8%
22.	Neurologic disorders	4-6%
23.	Dimension 2 topics without a corresponding Dimension 1 topic	4-6%



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION IN PSYCHIATRY 2021 Content Blueprint

Number of questions: 425		
Dimension 2		
Physician Competencies and Mechanisms		
A.	Neuroscience and mechanisms of disease	17-23%
B.	Behavioral/social sciences and psychosocial mechanisms of diseases	4-6%
C.	Clinical aspects of psychiatric and neuropsychiatric disorders	17-23%
D.	Diagnostic procedures	8-12%
E.	Treatment	25-35%
F.	Interpersonal and communication skills	2-4%
G.	Professionalism, ethics, and the law	3-5%
H.	Practice-based learning and improvement	3-5%
I.	Systems-based practice	3-5%



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION IN PSYCHIATRY 2021 Content Outline

Dimension 1
Psychiatric Disorders and Topics
01. Developmental processes and development through the life cycle (psychiatry and neurology)
a. Infancy through adolescence
i. Personality and other developmental processes
a. Child development theory (e.g., cognitive theory, moral development, learning theory, psychodynamics)
ii. Psychosocial influences
iii. Other
b. Adulthood
i. Personality adaptation and other developmental processes
ii. Psychosocial influences
iii. Acquisition and loss of specific capacities
iv. Other
c. Late life
i. Personality adaptation and other developmental processes
ii. Psychosocial influences
a. Life course – developmental and transitional events (retirement, death of a spouse)
iii. Acquisition and loss of specific capacities
a. Systemic, anatomic, and physiologic changes
b. Psychological changes
c. Other
iv. Other
02. Neurodevelopmental disorders
a. Intellectual disability
b. Language disorder
c. Speech sound disorder
d. Childhood-onset fluency disorder
e. Social communication disorder
f. Autistic spectrum disorder
g. Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

h. Specific learning disorder
i. Developmental coordination disorder
j. Stereotypic movement disorder
k. Tourette disorder
l. Persistent motor or vocal tic disorder
m. Provisional tic disorder
03. Substance-related and addictive disorders
a. Alcohol-related disorders
b. Caffeine-related disorders
c. Cannabis-related disorders
d. Hallucinogen-related disorders
e. Inhalant-related disorders
f. Opioid-related disorders
g. Sedative-, hypnotic-, or anxiolytic-related disorders
h. Stimulant-related disorders
i. Tobacco-related disorders
j. Other (or unknown) substance-related disorders
k. Gambling disorder
04. Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders
a. Delusional disorder
b. Brief psychotic disorder
c. Schizophreniform disorder
d. Schizophrenia
e. Schizoaffective disorder
f. Substance/medication-induced psychotic disorder
g. Psychotic disorder due to another medical condition
h. Catatonia
i. Catatonic disorder due to another medical condition
j. Unspecified catatonia
k. Other specified schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorder
l. Unspecified schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorder
05. Depressive disorders
a. Disruptive mood dysregulation disorder
b. Major depressive disorder
c. Persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia)



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

d. Premenstrual dysphoric disorder
e. Substance/medication-induced depressive disorder
f. Depressive disorder due to another medical condition
g. Other specified depressive disorder
h. Unspecified depressive disorder
06. Bipolar and related disorders
a. Bipolar I disorder
b. Bipolar II disorder
c. Cyclothymic disorder
d. Substance/medication-induced bipolar and related disorders
e. Bipolar and related disorder due to another medical condition
f. Other specified bipolar and related disorder
g. Unspecified bipolar and related disorder
07. Anxiety disorders
a. Separation anxiety disorder
b. Selective mutism
c. Specific phobia
d. Social anxiety disorder (social phobia)
e. Panic disorder
f. Agoraphobia
g. Generalized anxiety disorder
h. Substance/medication-induced anxiety disorder
i. Anxiety disorder due to another medical condition
j. Other specified anxiety disorder
k. Unspecified anxiety disorder
08. Obsessive-compulsive and related disorders
a. Obsessive-compulsive disorder
b. Body dysmorphic disorder
c. Hoarding disorder
d. Trichotillomania (hair-pulling disorder)
e. Excoriation (skin-picking) disorder
f. Substance/medication-induced obsessive-compulsive and related disorder
g. Obsessive-compulsive and related disorder due to another medical condition
h. Other specified obsessive-compulsive and related disorder
09. Trauma- and stressor-related disorders



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

a. Reactive attachment disorder
b. Disinhibited social engagement disorder
c. Posttraumatic stress disorder
d. Acute stress disorder
e. Adjustment disorders
f. Other specified trauma- and stressor-related disorder
10. Dissociative disorders
a. Dissociative identity disorder
b. Dissociative amnesia
c. Depersonalization/derealization disorder
d. Other specified dissociative disorder
e. Unspecified dissociative disorder
11. Somatic symptom and related disorders
a. Somatic symptom disorder
b. Illness anxiety disorder
c. Conversion disorder (functional neurological symptom disorder)
d. Psychological factors affecting other medical conditions
e. Factitious disorder
f. Other specified somatic symptom and related disorder
g. Unspecified somatic symptom and related disorder
12. Eating disorders
a. Pica
b. Rumination disorder
c. Avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder
d. Anorexia nervosa
e. Bulimia nervosa
f. Binge-eating disorder
g. Other specified feeding or eating disorder
h. Unspecified feeding or eating disorder
13. Elimination disorders
a. Enuresis
b. Encopresis
c. Other specified elimination disorder
14. Sleep-wake disorders
a. Insomnia disorder



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

b. Hypersomnolence disorder
c. Narcolepsy
d. Obstructive sleep apnea hypopnea
e. Central sleep apnea
f. Sleep-related hypoventilation
g. Circadian rhythm sleep-wake disorders
h. Non-REM sleep arousal disorders
i. Nightmare disorder
j. REM sleep behavior disorder
k. Restless legs syndrome
l. Substance/medication-induced sleep disorder
m. Other specified insomnia disorder
n. Unspecified insomnia disorder
o. Other specified hypersomnolence disorder
p. Unspecified hypersomnolence disorder
q. Other specified sleep-wake disorder
r. Unspecified sleep-wake disorder
15. Sexual dysfunctions
a. Delayed ejaculation
b. Erectile disorder
c. Female orgasmic disorder
d. Female sexual interest/arousal disorder
e. Genito-pelvic pain/penetration disorder
f. Male hypoactive sexual desire disorder
g. Premature (early) ejaculation
h. Substance/medication-induced sexual dysfunction
16. Gender dysphoria
17. Disruptive, impulse-control, and conduct disorders
a. Oppositional defiant disorder
b. Intermittent explosive disorder
c. Conduct disorder
d. Pyromania
e. Kleptomania
f. Other specified disruptive, impulse-control, and conduct disorder
g. Unspecified disruptive, impulse-control and conduct disorder



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

18. Personality disorders
a. Paranoid personality disorder
b. Schizoid personality disorder
c. Schizotypal personality disorder
d. Antisocial personality disorder
e. Borderline personality disorder
f. Histrionic personality disorder
g. Narcissistic personality disorder
h. Avoidant personality disorder
i. Dependent personality disorder
j. Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder
k. Personality changed due to another medical condition
l. Other specified personality disorder
m. Unspecified personality disorder
n. General personality disorder
19. Paraphilic disorders
a. Voyeuristic disorder
b. Exhibitionistic disorder
c. Frotteuristic disorder
d. Sexual masochism disorder
e. Sexual sadism disorder
f. Pedophilic disorder
g. Fetishistic disorder
h. Transvestic disorder
i. Other specified paraphilic disorder
j. Unspecified paraphilic disorder
20. Other conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention
21. Neurocognitive disorders
a. Delirium
b. Other specified delirium
c. Unspecified delirium
d. Major or mild neurocognitive disorder due to Alzheimer disease
e. Major or mild frontotemporal neurocognitive disorder
f. Major or mild neurocognitive disorder with Lewy bodies
g. Major or mild vascular neurocognitive disorder



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

h. Major or mild neurocognitive disorder due to traumatic brain injury
i. Substance/medication-induced major or mild neurocognitive disorder
j. Major or mild neurocognitive disorder due to HIV infection
k. Major or mild neurocognitive disorder due to prion disease
l. Major or mild neurocognitive disorder due to Parkinson disease
m. Major or mild neurocognitive disorder due to Huntington disease
n. Major or mild neurocognitive disorder due to another medical condition
o. Major or mild neurocognitive disorder due to multiple etiologies
p. Unspecified neurocognitive disorder
22. Neurologic disorders
a. Infections of the nervous system
b. Vascular diseases
c. Disorders of cerebrospinal and brain fluids
d. Neuro-oncology
e. Trauma
f. Birth injuries and developmental abnormalities
g. Genetic diseases of recognized biochemical abnormality
h. Cerebral degenerations of childhood
i. Cranial nerve disorders
j. Peripheral neuropathies
k. Ataxias
l. Headache
m. Movement disorders
n. Spinal cord diseases
o. Neuromuscular junction disorders
p. Myopathies
q. Demyelinating diseases
r. Epilepsy and episodic disorders
s. Neurologic complications of systemic diseases
t. Neurotoxicology
u. Pain syndromes
v. Other
23. Dimension 2 topics without a corresponding Dimension 1 topic



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

Dimension 2
Physician Competencies and Mechanisms
A. Neuroscience and mechanisms of disease
I. Neuroanatomy
II. Cellular and molecular neurobiology
III. Neuropathology
IV. Genetics
V. Neurochemistry
VI. Neurophysiology
VII. Chronobiology (e.g., biological rhythms, sleep)
VIII. Neuroendocrinology and neuroimmunology
IX. Other
B. Behavioral/social sciences and psychosocial mechanisms of diseases
I. Psychology
i. Experimental and behavioral psychology
ii. Neuropsychology, cognitive psychology
iii. Social psychology
iv. Psychoanalytic and psychodynamic psychology
v. Other
II. Sociology
III. Anthropology, culture, ethnicity, race, and spirituality
IV. Biostatistics
V. Research design
VI. Other
VII. Normal development
C. Clinical aspects of psychiatric and neuropsychiatric disorders
I. Epidemiology
II. Factors affecting psychiatric and neuropsychiatric disorders (predisposing, protective, and perpetuating factors, precipitants)
III. Clinical presentation, symptoms, and signs
IV. Comorbidity
V. Differential diagnosis
VI. Prognosis and course of illness
D. Diagnostic procedures
I. General physical and neurological examination



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

II. Psychiatric interview and mental status examination
III. Psychological testing
IV. Neuropsychological testing
V. Diagnostic assessments and rating scales
VI. Laboratory testing
VII. Neuroimaging
VIII. EEG
IX. Sleep Studies
X. Neurophysiologic testing
XI. Other
E. Treatment
I. General treatment planning and decision making
II. General principles of psychopharmacology and neuropharmacology
i. Pharmacokinetics/pharmacodynamics
ii. Drug interactions
iii. Age, gender, and ethnicity issues
iv. Genomics
III. Specific pharmacologic agents
i. Tricyclics and heterocyclics
ii. Monoamine oxidase inhibitors
iii. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI)
iv. Selective norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (NRI)
v. Selective serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRI)
vi. Other antidepressants
vii. Lithium
viii. Anticonvulsants
ix. Benzodiazepines
x. Beta blockers
xi. Alpha agonists
xii. Typical antipsychotics
xiii. Atypical antipsychotics
xiv. Psychostimulants
xv. Hypnotics and sedatives
xvi. Cognitive enhancers
xvii. Calcium channel blockers
xviii. Dopamine agonists (including L-DOPA)



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

xix. Anticholinergics
xx. Other agents used in the management of psychiatric disorders
xxi. Other agents used in the management of neurologic disorders
IV. Treatment of substance-related and addictive disorders
i. Pharmacologic
a. Management of use (disorder), intoxication, and withdrawal
b. Relapse prevention
c. Management of co-occurring conditions
ii. Nonpharmacologic
a. Management of use (disorder), intoxication, and withdrawal
b. Relapse prevention
c. Management of co-occurring conditions
V. Treatment of aggression/self-injury
i. Pharmacologic
ii. Nonpharmacologic
VI. Treatment of sleep-wake disorders
i. Pharmacologic
ii. Nonpharmacologic
VII. Treatment of pain
i. Pharmacologic
ii. Nonpharmacologic
VIII. Treatment of neuroleptic malignant syndrome, TDEPS, and serotonin syndrome
i. Pharmacologic
ii. Nonpharmacologic
IX. Pharmacotherapy in special situations
i. Renal disease
ii. Hepatic disease
iii. Pregnancy
iv. Breast-feeding
v. Tardive dyskinesia and extrapyramidal symptoms
X. Augmentation strategies
XI. Nonpharmacologic somatic treatment
i. Biofeedback
ii. Electroconvulsive therapy
iii. Phototherapy
iv. Chronotherapy



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

v. Vagal nerve stimulation
vi. rTMS (repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation)
vii. Neurosurgical approaches
viii. Other
XII. Psychotherapy
i. Supportive
ii. Cognitive and/or behavioral
iii. Interpersonal
iv. Psychodynamic and psychoanalytic
v. Couples and family
vi. Group
vii. Crisis intervention (e.g. critical incident debriefing, psychological debriefing/early intervention)
viii. Motivational interviewing
ix. Other (e.g., hypnotherapy, sex therapy, mindfulness, meditation)
XIII. Psychosocial interventions
i. Psychoeducation
ii. Vocational and occupational rehabilitation
iii. Self-help groups (e.g., AA, NA)
iv. Community-based treatment programs (e.g., halfway houses, day hospitals, multimodal treatment programs, therapeutic communities, opioid agonist treatment programs)
v. Other
F. Interpersonal and communication skills
I. Communication with patients
II. Communication with other professionals
III. Communication with the public
IV. Communication with patients' families
V. Communication with the healthcare team
G. Professionalism, ethics, and the law
I. Sensitivity to diversity
II. Adherence to ethical principles (e.g., informed consent, research issues, clinical care)
III. Fatigue management, work-life balance, and physician well-being
IV. Professional behavior
V. Participation in the professional community
VI. Legal issues in psychiatry



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

VII. End of life issues
H. Practice-based learning and improvement
I. Development and execution of lifelong learning
i. Self-assessment and self-improvement
ii. Use of evidence in the clinical workflow
II. Formal practice-based quality improvement
I. Systems-based practice
I. Patient safety and the healthcare team
i. Medical errors, patient safety, quality improvement, and improvement activities
ii. Regulatory and educational activities related to patient safety
II. Resource management
i. Parity
ii. Access to care
III. Community-based care
i. Community based programs
a. Other (e.g. nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living)
ii. Prevention
iii. Recovery and rehabilitation
iv. Integrated care (collaborative care)
IV. Consultation to nonpsychiatric medical providers and nonmedical systems (e.g., military, schools, businesses, forensic)
V. Public health and prevention, and public policy
VI. Documentation of practice, management of records, insurance, and reimbursement