



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

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

Instructions for the 2021 Psychiatry Certification Examination

Examination Format

The 2021 Psychiatry Certification Examination is comprised of 425 questions. New content outline specifications for the 2021 examination are substantially different from the examination in the past. Please make sure to review the new Content Specifications [on the website](#).

At the beginning of the examination, there is a nondisclosure agreement (NDA) that examinees must agree to, followed by on-screen instructions. At the conclusion of the examination, there is a five-minute end-of-examination survey.

During the examination, there are 60 minutes of pooled break time available for use. Break time can be accessed during the optional breaks that are offered between each section. Examinees can use as much or as little break time as they see fit during any given optional break (lunch time is included as part of the pooled break time); however, please note that if you exhaust the entire amount of pooled break time (60 minutes) before the end of the examination, any time spent on subsequent breaks will decrease your available remaining examination time. To monitor the amount of break time taken and/or remaining, examinees should pay close attention to the Total Break Time Remaining field displayed on the break screens. If a negative number is displayed in the Total Break Time Remaining field, then the allotted break time has been exhausted and your examination will have the amount of time displayed deducted from your overall examination time. Examinees are expected to manage the pace and timing of the examination themselves. Allotted time for the entire examination, including NDA, instructions and survey, totals nine-and-one-half hours. The 2021 Psychiatry Certification Examination Format table below demonstrates the examination delivery structure.

2021 Psychiatry Certification Examination Format

	Section	No. of Questions	No. of Audio/ Video	Format
5 Min	Nondisclosure Agreement			
	On-Screen Tutorial/ Instructions			
8 hrs 20 min - Test Time 60 min - Pooled Break Time	1	68	NA	Stand-alone
	Optional Break*			
	2	38	TBD	Linked-Item Set (Vignette)
	Optional Break*			
	3	68	NA	Stand-alone
	Optional Break*			
	4	38	TBD	Linked-Item Set (Vignette)
	Optional Break*			
	5	68	NA	Stand-alone
	Optional Break*			
	6	38	TBD	Linked-Item Set (Vignette)
	Optional Break*			
	7	69	NA	Stand-alone
	Optional Break*			
8	38	TBD	Linked-Item Set (Vignette)	
5 Min	End-of-Examination Survey			

*This is part of the pooled break time. 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

There are two types of questions in the 2021 Psychiatry Certification Examination: stand-alone and linked-item set (vignette). *Stand-alone* questions are one-best-answer multiple-choice questions that are not associated with any other questions. For *linked-item set (vignette)* questions, there are typically two to ten multiple-choice questions linked to a common case that may be presented in a video clip, which may vary in length from one to five minutes, an audio clip, or in a text linked-item set (vignette). The video and audio clip questions require the use of headphones to be provided by Pearson VUE. Some linked-item set (vignette) questions require more than one answer. For these questions, the required number of answers must be provided in order to advance to the next question. The ABPN does not give partial credit for linked-item set (vignette) questions. For any question that requires more than one answer, examinees must provide all required answers correctly in order to obtain full credit.

As the above chart demonstrates, stand-alone items and linked-item set (vignette) items are delivered in separate sections. In **linked-item set (vignette)** sections, linked-item set (vignette) questions are set up in a linear navigation mode. Every linked-item set (vignette) question must be answered before moving on to the next question. Once an examiner has answered a question and navigates forward to the next one, the answer to that question cannot be changed. **Starting 2019, examinees CAN go back to revisit previously answered linked-item set (vignette) questions within a section although they still CANNOT change the answers.** After leaving a section, an examinee *cannot* review questions in that section again.

Stand-alone multiple-choice questions can be flagged for review or skipped, but after leaving a section an examinee *cannot* review questions in that section again.

Scoring

Examinees will receive a standard score for the total test. An acceptable level of performance must be achieved on the total standard score to pass the examination. The standards are not norm-referenced; there is no predefined passing rate for any group of examinees. In addition, examinees will receive a graphic diagnostic report for their performance on various subtopics of the examination.

Items that may be included in the examination solely for research or pretesting purposes will not be included in the examinees' scores.

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.

Examination Functions

To familiarize examinees with the examination functions, several examination screenshots with explanations are provided [here](#). In addition to the general functions, such as Time Remaining and Number of Questions, please pay special attention to the functions for video fast forward and rewind, Comment, Scratch Pad, Highlight, Strikethrough, Flag for Review, Section Map/Drug List/Tutorial, Navigator, and functions related to linked-item set (vignette) questions.