



Content Blueprint for the Palliative Medicine and Hospice Care Certificate of Added Qualification (CAQ) Examination

The Palliative Medicine and Hospice Care CAQ content blueprint provides information on how exam questions are allocated to the different task categories and medical content categories that have been deemed important for physician assistants working within the specialty area. The percentage allocations may vary slightly of different versions of the exam.

The examples provided for each task and medical content category are indicative of the types of information that will be included on the examination. It is not possible to include all topics on a single examination, and it may be possible that some questions on a single examination cover content that is not listed in the examples.

Task Categories

	Percentage
Managing Suffering and Distress	40%
Whole Patient Assessment	20%
Prognostication and Natural History of Serious and Complex Illness	10%
Managing Medical Interventions	7%
Ethical and Legal Aspects of Care	5%
Safety and Risk Management	4%
Grief, Loss, and Bereavement	3%
Impending Death and the Death Event	3%
Interdisciplinary Teamwork, Quality, and Professionalism	3%
Managing Palliative Care Emergencies and Refractory Symptoms	3%
Communication Skills	2%

Medical Content Categories*

	Percentage*
Cardiovascular System	12%
Dermatologic System	2%
Eyes, Ears, Nose, and Throat	5%
Gastrointestinal System/Nutrition	12%
Genitourinary/Reproductive System (Male and Female)	12%
Hematologic System	5%
Infectious Diseases	10%
Musculoskeletal System	5%
Neurologic System	12%
Psychiatry/Behavioral Science	5%
Pulmonary System	12%
Renal System	5%
Traumatic Injuries	3%

*All questions on this examination will be coded to one task category. However, some questions will not include information related to a medical condition. For items that do require information about a medical condition, disease, or disorder, the content will be allocated to the medical content areas as indicated above.

Task Categories

Managing Suffering and Distress

- Pain management
- Management of non-pain symptoms
- Additional management strategies

Whole Patient Assessment

- Concepts of total pain and suffering
- Pain and symptom assessment
- Cultural considerations
- Social determinants of medicine
- Decision-making capacity
- Caregiver assessment
- Spiritual consideration

Prognostication and Natural History of Serious and Complex Illness

- Prognostication and Natural History of Serious and complex illness

Managing Medical Interventions

- Respiratory support
- Renal replacement therapy
- Cardiac support
- Antibiotics
- Anticoagulation
- Intravenous fluids and nutrition
- Withdrawal of life-sustaining therapies

Ethical and Legal Aspects of Care

- Surrogate decision-making
- Advance care planning
- Futility
- Principle of double effect
- Withdrawal of life-sustaining therapies

Safety and Risk Management

- Addressing substance misuse
- Medication management
- Provider situational awareness and patient safety
- Adverse effects, reactions, and toxicities

Grief, Loss, and Bereavement

- Anticipatory grief
- Normal grief and bereavement patterns
- Problematic grief and bereavement patterns
- Loss history
- Needs of bereaved minor children

Impending Death and the Death Event

- Manifestations of impending death
- Management of the death event
- Post-death care

Interdisciplinary Teamwork, Quality, and Professionalism

- Roles and functions of team members
- Effective teamwork
- Staff support and safety
- Professionalism
- Consultation and comanagement
- Transitions of care (e.g., Medicare hospice benefit)
- Self-care

Managing Palliative Care Emergencies and Refractory Symptoms

- Acute airway obstruction
- Acute hypoxia
- Bowel obstruction
- Delirium (emergent)
- Device loss or malfunction
- Fractures
- Hemorrhage
- Hypercalcemia
- Increased intracranial pressure
- Pneumonia
- Pneumothorax
- Seizures
- Serotonin syndrome
- Spinal cord compression
- Superior vena cava
- Proportional sedation

Communication Skills

- Communication techniques
- Delivering serious news
- Death notification
- Patient- and family-centered approach
- Conflict resolution skills

Medical Content Categories

Cardiovascular System (12%)

- Aneurysm
- Aortic dissection
- Cardiomyopathy
- Congestive heart failure
- Endocarditis
- Peripheral vascular disease
- Shock

Dermatologic System (2%)

- Decubitus ulcers
- Melanoma
- Scleroderma

Eyes, Ears, Nose, and Throat (5%)

- Head and neck cancer

Gastrointestinal System/Nutrition (12%)

- Complications of gastrointestinal surgery
- Colorectal cancer
- Gastrointestinal malignancies (colon, liver, gastric, pancreatic)
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Malignant bowel obstructions
- Perforated diverticulum
- Small-bowel obstructions

Genitourinary/Reproductive System (Male and Female) (12%)

- Breast cancer
- Complications of pregnancy
- Genitourinary cancers (ovarian, penile, bladder, prostate)
- Urinary obstructions

Hematologic System (5%)

- Leukemias
- Lymphomas
- Multiple myeloma
- Myelodysplastic syndromes
- Sickle cell disease

Infectious Diseases (10%)

- COVID-19/post-COVID-19 syndrome
- HIV
- Pneumonia
- Septicemia

Musculoskeletal System (5%)

- Fractures (pathologic, frailty)
- Loss of limb
- Rheumatologic diseases
- Sarcoma (osteosarcoma)
- Scleroderma
- Spinal cord compression

Neurologic System (12%)

- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis
- Anoxic brain injury
- Multiple sclerosis
- Neurocognitive disorder (dementia)
- Status epilepticus
- Stroke

Psychiatry/Behavioral Science (5%)

- Major depressive disorder
- Persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia)
- Premenstrual dysphoric disorder
- Suicidal/homicidal behaviors

Pulmonary System (12%)

- Acute bronchiolitis
- Acute bronchitis
- Acute epiglottitis
- Croup
- Influenza
- Pertussis

Renal System (5%)

- Chronic kidney disease
- Complications of diabetes
- End-stage renal disease

Traumatic Injuries (3%)

- Anoxic brain injury
- Burns
- Gunshot wounds
- Traumatic brain injury