



Content Blueprint for the Palliative Medicine and Hospice Care 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 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

A. Managing Suffering and Distress	40%
B. Whole Patient Assessment	20%
C. Prognostication and Natural History of Serious and Complex Illness	10%
D. Managing Medical Interventions	7%
E. Ethical and Legal Aspects of Care	5%
F. Safety and Risk Management	4%
G. Grief, Loss, and Bereavement	3%
H. Impending Death and the Death Event	3%
I. Interdisciplinary Teamwork, Quality, and Professionalism	3%
J. Managing Palliative Medicine Emergencies and Refractory Symptoms	3%
K. Communication Skills	2%

Medical Content Categories*

A. Cardiovascular System	12%
B. Dermatologic System	2%
C. Eyes, Ears, Nose, and Throat	5%
D. Gastrointestinal System/Nutrition	12%
E. Genitourinary/Reproductive System (Male and Female)	12%
F. Hematologic System	5%
G. Infectious Diseases	10%
H. Musculoskeletal System	5%
I. Neurologic System	12%
J. Psychiatry/Behavioral Science	5%
K. Pulmonary System	12%
L. Renal System	5%
M. 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

A. Managing Suffering and Distress

1. Pain management
2. Management of non-pain symptoms
3. Additional management strategies

B. Whole Patient Assessment

1. Concepts of total pain and suffering
2. Pain and symptom assessment
3. Cultural considerations
4. Social determinants of medicine
5. Decision-making capacity
6. Caregiver assessment
7. Spiritual consideration

C. Prognostication and Natural History of Serious and Complex Illness

1. Prognostication and Natural History of Serious and complex illness

D. Managing Medical Interventions

1. Respiratory support
2. Renal replacement therapy
3. Cardiac support
4. Antimicrobials
5. Anticoagulation
6. Intravenous fluids and nutrition
7. Withdrawal of life-sustaining therapies

E. Ethical and Legal Aspects of Care

1. Surrogate decision-making
2. Advance care planning
3. Futility
4. Principle of double effect
5. Withdrawal of life-sustaining therapies

F. Safety and Risk Management

1. Addressing substance misuse
2. Medication management
3. Provider situational awareness and patient safety
4. Adverse effects, reactions, and toxicities

G. Grief, Loss, and Bereavement

1. Anticipatory grief
2. Normal grief and bereavement patterns

3. Problematic grief and bereavement patterns
4. Loss history
5. Needs of bereaved minor children

H. Impending Death and the Death Event

1. Manifestations of impending death
2. Management of the death event
3. Post-death care

I. Interdisciplinary Teamwork, Quality, and Professionalism

1. Roles and functions of team members
2. Effective teamwork
3. Staff support and safety
4. Professionalism
5. Consultation and comanagement
6. Transitions of care (e.g., Medicare hospice benefit)
7. Self-care

J. Managing Palliative Medicine Emergencies and Refractory Symptoms

1. Acute airway obstruction
2. Acute hypoxia
3. Bowel obstruction
4. Delirium (emergent)
5. Device loss or malfunction
6. Fractures
7. Hemorrhage
8. Hypercalcemia
9. Increased intracranial pressure
10. Pneumonia
11. Pneumothorax
12. Seizures
13. Serotonin syndrome
14. Spinal cord compression
15. Superior vena cava
16. Proportional sedation

K. Communication Skills

1. Communication techniques
2. Delivering serious news
3. Death notification
4. Patient- and family-centered approach
5. Conflict resolution skills

Medical Content Categories

A. Cardiovascular System (12%)

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

B. Dermatologic System (2%)

- Decubitus ulcers
- Melanoma
- Scleroderma

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

- Head and neck cancer

D. 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

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

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

F. Hematologic System (5%)

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

G. Infectious Diseases (10%)

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

H. Musculoskeletal System (5%)

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

I. Neurologic System (12%)

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

J. Psychiatry/Behavioral Science (5%)

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

K. Pulmonary System (12%)

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

L. Renal System (5%)

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

M. Traumatic Injuries (3%)

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