

Guide to Exams

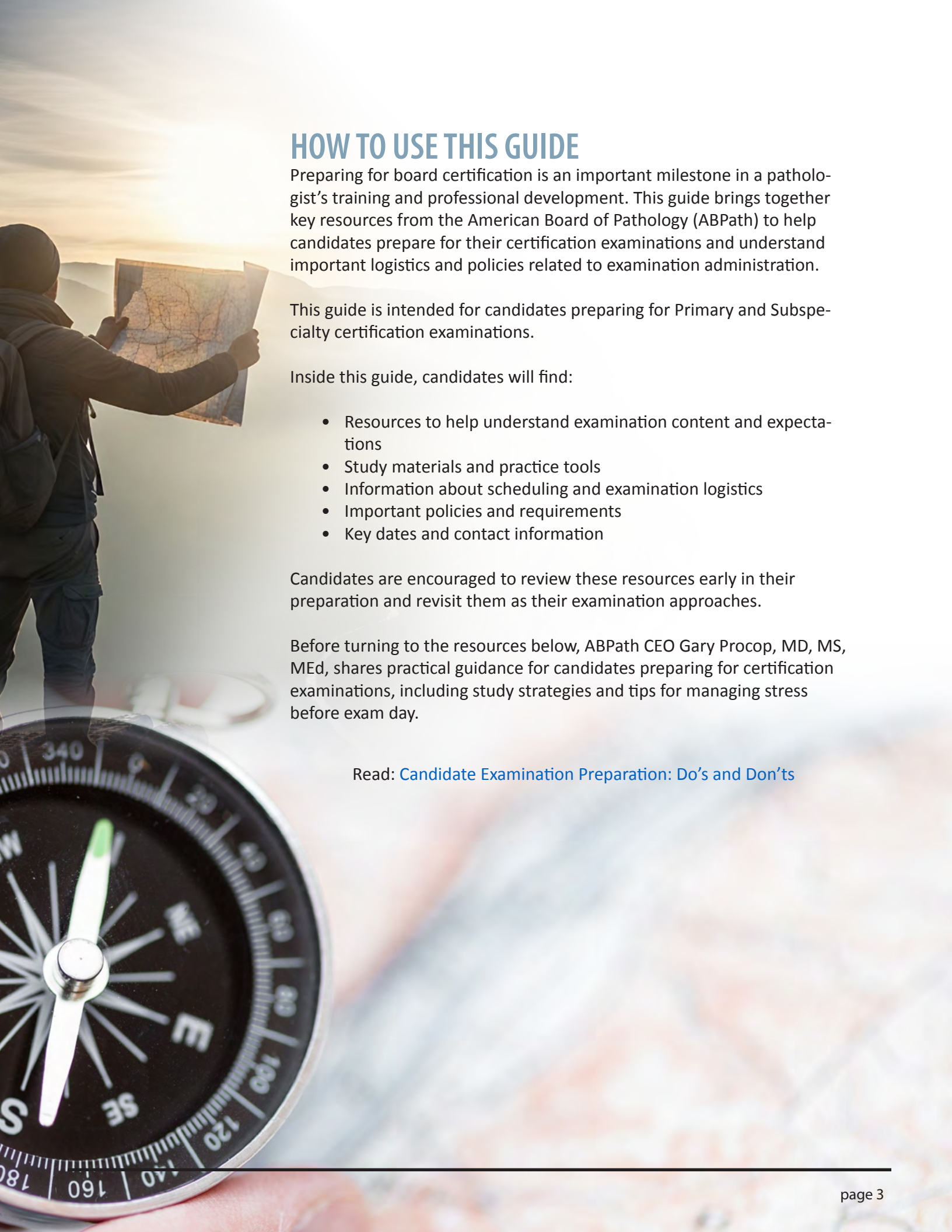
Preparing for ABPath Certification Examinations



ABPath Candidate Resource Guide

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Preparing for board certification is an important milestone in a pathologist's training and professional development. This guide brings together key resources from the American Board of Pathology (ABPath) to help candidates prepare for their certification examinations and understand important logistics and policies related to examination administration.

This guide is intended for candidates preparing for Primary and Subspecialty certification examinations.

Inside this guide, candidates will find:

- Resources to help understand examination content and expectations
- Study materials and practice tools
- Information about scheduling and examination logistics
- Important policies and requirements
- Key dates and contact information

Candidates are encouraged to review these resources early in their preparation and revisit them as their examination approaches.

Before turning to the resources below, ABPath CEO Gary Procop, MD, MS, MEd, shares practical guidance for candidates preparing for certification examinations, including study strategies and tips for managing stress before exam day.

Read: [Candidate Examination Preparation: Do's and Don'ts](#)

PREPARING FOR THE EXAM

ABPath provides several resources to help candidates understand the content areas assessed on certification examinations and prepare for the exam. These resources include materials that help candidates understand exam content, locate helpful study references, and become familiar with the exam format. All of the resources described below are available on the [ABPath Exam Preparation](#) webpage

Understanding Exam Content

Several ABPath resources are available to help candidates understand the content areas that may be assessed on certification examinations.

Exam Descriptions

Exam descriptions outline the structure and scope of each certification and subspecialty exam.

- [Primary Certification Exam Descriptions](#)
- [Subspecialty Certification Exam Descriptions](#)

Primary Exam Descriptions

The ABPath uses criterion-referenced tests for its certification examinations.

Criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) are intended to measure how well a person has learned a specific body of knowledge and skills. On a CRT, the passing or "cut-off" score is determined in advance by a committee of experts in the field. The candidate's performance (i.e. mastery of the subject matter) is compared to the cut-off score and not to other test takers.

Theoretically, all candidates could pass or fail depending on how they performed relative to the passing score. Driving tests are an example of CRTs, because the goal is to see whether the test taker is skilled enough to be granted a driver's license, not to see if one test taker is more skilled than another test taker. In contrast, norm-referenced tests (NRTs) compare test takers to each other. Scores are reported as a percentage rank with half scoring above and half below the mid-point. NRTs are designed to sort and rank students "on the curve," not to see if they met a standard or criterion. The ABPath does NOT use NRTs for its certification examinations.

Subspecialty Exam Descriptions

The ABPath uses criterion-referenced tests for its certification examinations.

Criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) are intended to measure how well a person has learned a specific body of knowledge and skills. On a CRT, the passing or "cut-off" score is determined in advance by a committee of experts in the field. The candidate's performance (i.e. mastery of the subject matter) is compared to the cut-off score and not to other test takers. Theoretically, all candidates could pass or fail depending on how they performed relative to the passing score. Driving tests are an example of CRTs, because the goal is to see whether the test taker is skilled enough to be granted a driver's license, not to see if one test taker is more skilled than another test taker. In contrast, norm-referenced tests (NRTs) compare test takers to each other. Scores are reported as a percentage rank with half scoring above and half below the mid-point. NRTs are designed to sort and rank students "on the curve," not to see if they met a standard or criterion. The ABPath does NOT use NRTs for its certification examinations.

Content Specifications and Exam Blueprints

These resources help candidates understand the content areas that may be assessed on certification examinations and can serve as a roadmap for exam preparation.

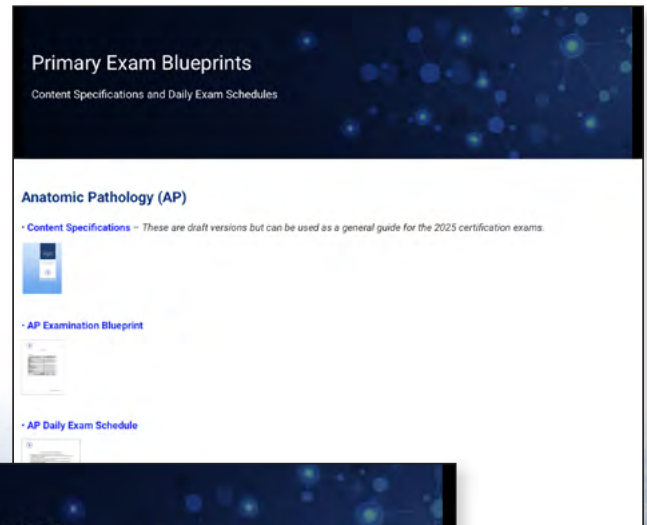
- Content Specifications provide detailed lists of the topics and subject areas that may appear on the exam.

[Content Specifications](#)

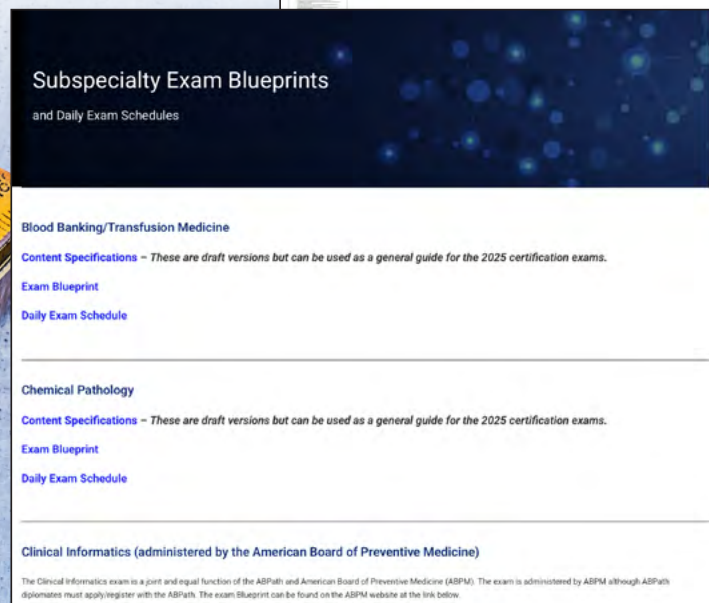
- Exam Blueprints offer a high-level overview of exam categories and the approximate percentage of questions within each category.

[Primary Certification Exam Blueprints](#)

[Subspecialty Certification Exam Blueprints](#)



The screenshot shows the 'Primary Exam Blueprints' page. The header is dark blue with white text: 'Primary Exam Blueprints' and 'Content Specifications and Daily Exam Schedules'. Below the header, the page is titled 'Anatomic Pathology (AP)'. A note states: 'Content Specifications - These are draft versions but can be used as a general guide for the 2025 certification exams.' There are three links: 'AP Examination Blueprint', 'AP Daily Exam Schedule', and 'AP Content Specifications'.



The screenshot shows the 'Subspecialty Exam Blueprints' page. The header is dark blue with white text: 'Subspecialty Exam Blueprints' and 'and Daily Exam Schedules'. The page lists three subspecialties: 'Blood Banking/Transfusion Medicine', 'Chemical Pathology', and 'Clinical Informatics (administered by the American Board of Preventive Medicine)'. Each subspecialty has a note: 'Content Specifications - These are draft versions but can be used as a general guide for the 2025 certification exams.' and links for 'Exam Blueprint' and 'Daily Exam Schedule'. A footer note states: 'The Clinical Informatics exam is a joint and equal function of the ABPath and American Board of Preventive Medicine (ABPM). The exam is administered by ABPM although ABPath (Sponsors) must apply/register with the ABPath. The exam Blueprint can be found on the ABPM website at the link below.'

Terminology Resources

ABPath has provided guidance on abbreviations and terminology used in certification examinations. Reviewing these resources can help candidates become familiar with the terminology used on ABPath exams.

Terminology Updates

Accepted Abbreviations – *Please note that the abbreviations will also be available as a resource in the exam platform itself.*



Study and Reference Materials

The following resource may also support candidates during exam preparation.

Guidelines and Key Manuscripts

This curated collection includes important guidelines and references assembled with input from ABPath Test Development and Advisory Committees and cooperating societies. These materials may be helpful for exam preparation and professional development.

[Guidelines and Key Manuscripts](#)



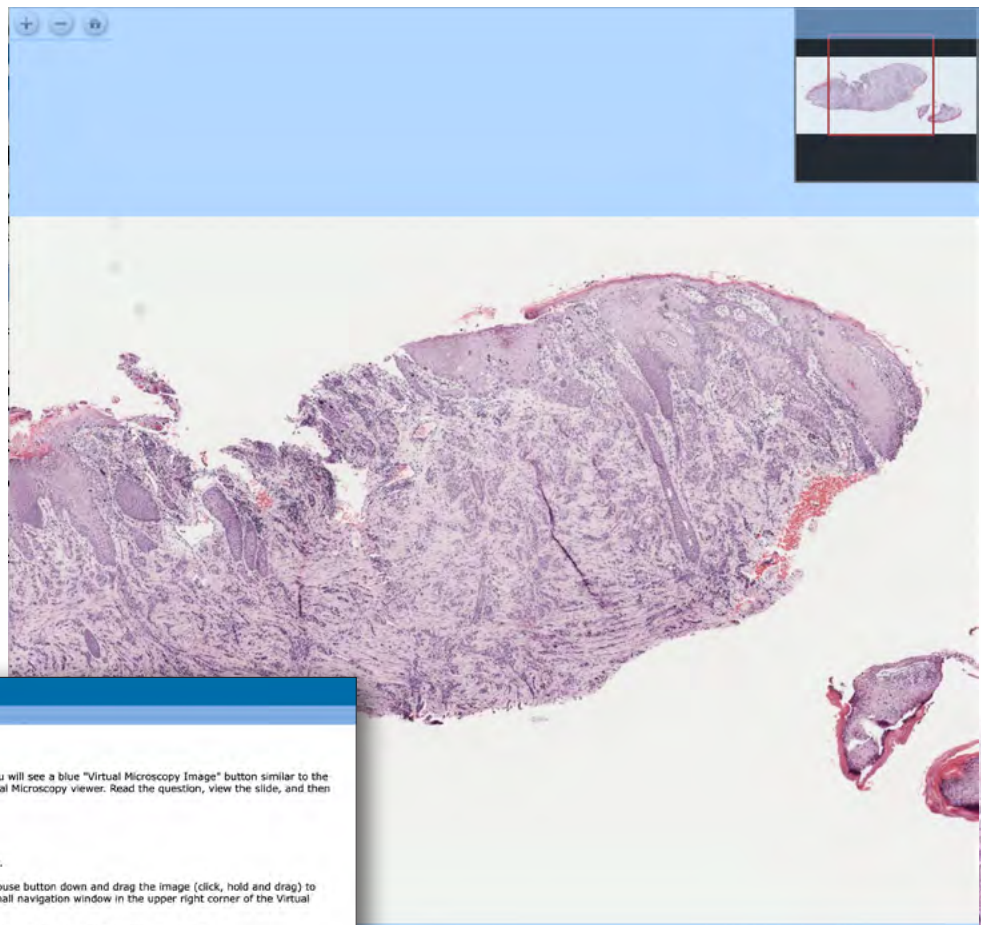
Becoming Familiar with the Exam Format

ABPath provides several tools to help candidates become familiar with the exam platform and question format before exam day. These tools are available on the ABPath Exam Preparation webpage.

Virtual Microscopy Practice Site

Practice viewing digital slides similar to those used in ABPath certification examinations.

[Virtual Microscopy Practice Site](#)



American Board of Pathology Virtual Microscopy Sample Exam

Instructions:

When you encounter a question on an exam that utilizes Virtual Microscopy, you will see a blue "Virtual Microscopy Image" button similar to the one below. Clicking this button will open up another window solely for the Virtual Microscopy viewer. Read the question, view the slide, and then select the correct answer on your computer screen.

[Click Here to View Virtual Microscopy Image](#)

For Virtual Microscopy questions the best way to navigate is to use your mouse.

MOVING THE SLIDE: Place the mouse cursor over the image, hold the left mouse button down and drag the image (click, hold and drag) to move up, down, right, or left or navigate quickly using the red square in the small navigation window in the upper right corner of the Virtual Microscopy viewer window.

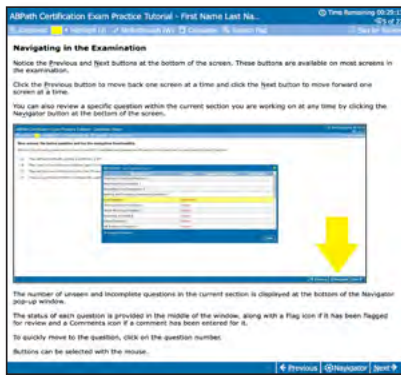
CHANGING MAGNIFICATION: Use the mouse wheel. Roll the mouse wheel forward and backward to zoom in and out.

NOTE: If "white space" appears when you zoom in to high power, you are most likely in space between pieces of tissue.

The following icons in the upper left corner of the Virtual Microscopy viewer window can also be selected to navigate the image; however, we recommend using your mouse for navigation as it is faster and easier. We do recommend using the small navigation windows in the upper right corner to view a thumbnail of the image and use the red square to navigate quickly from one area or piece of tissue to another.

- Zoom In Icon** - Will zoom in on the section of tissue in the middle of the viewer window.
- Zoom Out Icon** - Will zoom out from the section of tissue in the middle of the viewer window.
- Go Home Icon** - Will resize the image so it fully displays within the viewer window.

The viewer window will automatically open up to be 1200 pixels in width. You can move, enlarge, or reduce the size of the viewer window by using your mouse to get an arrow along any edge or corner of the viewer window.



Practice Tutorial for Certification Exams

Complete the tutorial to become familiar with the exam interface and testing tools used during the exam.

[Practice Tutorial for Certification Exams](#)

Sample Exam Questions

View examples of the style and format of questions used on ABPath certification examinations.

[Sample Exam Questions](#)

Together, these resources help candidates understand exam expectations and prepare effectively for ABPath certification examinations.



Tip for Candidates

Many candidates begin their preparation by reviewing the [Content Specifications](#) for their exam and identifying the major topic areas to study.

Additional resources, such as [Guidelines and Key Manuscripts](#), [Virtual Microscopy](#), and [Sample Questions](#) can then be used to support broader professional knowledge and familiarize candidates with the exam format and interface.



PLANNING YOUR EXAM

After reviewing the resources available to support exam preparation, candidates should also become familiar with the logistics of scheduling and taking the exam.

ABPath certification exams are administered at Pearson Professional Test Centers. Candidates schedule their exam appointment through Pearson after registration opens. Reviewing exam logistics early can help ensure a smooth testing experience.

Important Dates and Deadlines

Candidates should review exam windows, registration deadlines, and other key dates on the ABPath website:

<https://abpath.org/get-certified/>

Checking these dates early and revisiting them as the exam approaches can help candidates plan accordingly.

Fees

Information about certification exam fees and payment policies is available on the ABPath website. Candidates should review the current fee schedule when planning their exam registration.

- [Primary Certification Exam Dates, Deadlines and Fees](#)
- [Subspecialty Certification Exam Dates, Deadlines and Fees](#)

Exam Location Preference (PATHway)

ABPath also offers a location preference form within PATHway. Candidates may enter their preferred city, state, and ZIP code.

This information helps Pearson plan testing center availability at locations near candidates. Submitting a location preference does not guarantee assignment to a test center in that location. Pearson administers examinations for many organizations, and test center availability is shared among multiple programs. The form will appear in PATHway once the application/registration period closes for each exam and will be available for one month.

Scheduling and Test Center Information

Information about scheduling your exam and what to expect at the test center is available on the ABPath website:

[Pearson Test Center Information](#)

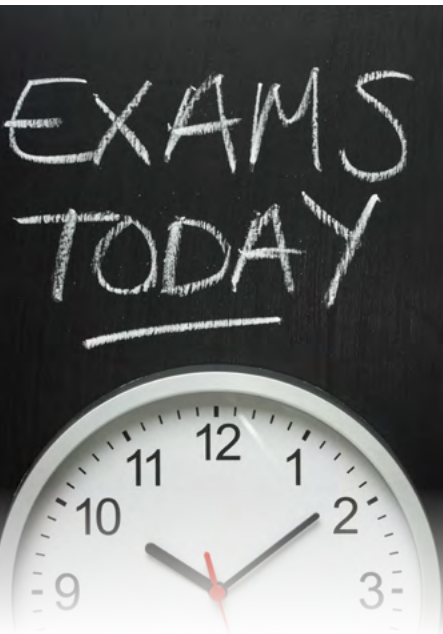
This page includes information about:

- What to Expect When Scheduling an Exam with Pearson
- ABPath Pearson Scheduling page
- The Candidate Rules Agreement
- Pearson Identification (ID) Policy
- Pearson Comfort Aid List

Candidates are encouraged to review this information before scheduling or taking their exam.

Daily Exam Schedules





For a detailed look at the structure of the exam day, see the Daily Exam Schedules on the [Exam Preparation page](#).

General Reminders

A few simple steps to help prevent issues on exam day:

- The first and last name in PATHway must match exactly the name on the two forms of identification presented at the test center.
- Ensure your primary email address in PATHway is current, as important communications from ABPath and Pearson will be sent to this address.



Exam Day Checklist

Before your exam:

- Confirm your Pearson test center appointment
- Verify your name in PATHway matches your identification
- Review ABPath Candidate Rules
- Review the Pearson Comfort Aid List



POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

Candidates should review several important policies before scheduling their exam.

ABPath Booklet of Information

The primary source for policies, procedures, and requirements related to board certification in pathology.

[Booklet of Information](#)

Accommodation Requests

Candidates requesting testing accommodations should contact ABPath before the respective exam's accommodations submission deadline dates. Information on accommodations can be found on the [Accommodation Policy](#) webpage.

Primary Exams Accommodation Requests

mary@abpath.org

Subspecialty Exams Accommodation Requests

renee@abpath.org



Nursing Mother Accommodations

Information regarding nursing mother accommodations is available on the ABPath website.

[Nursing Mother Accommodations](#)

Cancellation Policy

Candidates who need to cancel their examination must do so before the published cancellation deadline. Full details are available at the link below.

[Cancellation Policy](#)

Honor Code and Professionalism


Candidates applying for certification agree to abide by the [ABPath Honor Code](#).

This statement outlines expectations regarding professionalism, confidentiality, and exam integrity.

Exam FAQs

Answers to frequently asked questions about certification exams and policies.


[Primary and Subspecialty Exam FAQs](#)



Welcome to the AMERICAN BOARD OF PATHOLOGY (ABPath).
 This page will provide instructions on using PATHWAY, your online tool for managing residents through their pathology training and board certification process. This is the same system residents will use to complete their board certification exam application. Please see below to familiarize yourself with PATHWAY.

PATHWAY can be accessed via the ABPath homepage or at https://path_detailstheboardofpathology.com/ABPathKeyDefault.aspx

For questions or assistance contact: Mary Pylton, Primary Certification Coordinator at Mary.Pylton@abpath.org



Program PATHWAY Login

- There is one login for each program.
- The Program Director and Program Coordinator share the same login.
- You cannot use the "Create Username" or "Forgot Username/Password" link to access the program login information. If you do not remember your login information contact Mary.Pylton@abpath.org
- It is possible for a Program Director to have multiple logins. You may have a login for access to your personal information as a diplomate, another as the Program Director, and another as Director of a Fellowship Program. They are not interchangeable.

Change of Program Directors

- If you have a change in Program Directors, please provide the new Program Director with your program's current username and password.
- The new Program Director may then log in and update the name and email address on the Program Profile tab and change the username and password.


Resident Applications for Board Certification

- Board certification application links will be available in each resident's PATHWAY account in their final year of training. September 15 for the Spring exams and February 16 for the Fall exams.

FOR PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Program directors and coordinators can find resources to support residents and fellows — including the Resident Orientation Presentation, information about Program Performance Reports, and the Booklet of Information — on the ABPath Program Director page.

[ABPath Program Director Page](#)



Completing Resident Tracking/Management

In July of each new academic year, ABPath requires all ACP training programs to enter their incoming residents and to update the status of their current residents in PATHWAY. Below are detailed instructions to assist you.

For questions or assistance contact: Mary Pylton, Primary Certification Coordinator at Mary.Pylton@abpath.org

The deadline to complete and submit is September 1.

Please enter your resident information carefully and correctly. If the information is not entered correctly, it will result in errors in your Program Performance Reports.

Program Login

- Each program has its own login.
- Program Directors have a personal login and a program login.
- Program Director/Coordinators share the same program login.
- You cannot use the "Forgot Username" function to gain login information for programs, please contact Mary.Pylton@abpath.org for assistance.

Change of Program Director

- If you have a change in Program Directors, please provide the new Program Director with your program's current username and password.
- The new Program Director may then log in and update their name and email address on the Program Profile tab and they may also change the username and password.

Program Profile

- Please review/update the program contact information.
- Be sure both the Program Director and Program Coordinator's names and email addresses are current to receive important ABPath updates.
- You can update this information throughout the year with new changes.

Resident Management

1) **Adding PGT 1 residents**

- This information will be used to create the resident's permanent record, so you must enter their full legal name, not a nickname.
- If a resident joined your program on a date other than July 1, please indicate their PGT status as of July 1.
 - To add a PGT 1 resident or new residents, scroll to the bottom of the page to enter the resident's information.
- The resident will be added alphabetically to your list of residents. NOTE: Any errors will be noted immediately with a red asterisk below the field.

Examination Performance 2025 - Primary Certification

▶ Exam Performance Notes

2025 Primary Examination Search: Q

Primary	Total Candidates	# Passed	% Passed	First-Time Takers	# Passed	% Passed	Repeaters	# Passed	% Passed
AP	695	565	84%	569	524	92%	126	61	48%
CP	617	514	83%	529	478	90%	88	37	42%

2025 5-Year Certified Report (Certificates) Search: Q

Primary	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
APCP	533	500	477	427	488
AP only	165	100	75	71	77
CP only	55	54	55	50	49
APNP	17	7	5	10	8

2025 Primary Exam Pass Rates Search: Q

Primary	2021 % Pass	2022 % Pass	2023 % Pass	2024 % Pass	2025 % Pass
AP only	82	87*	84	81	89
CP only	94	94*	94	88	88

*New criterion standard applied
 % Pass = Spring exam pass rate





2026 EXAM DATES

Primary and subspecialty certification exam windows are listed below and are also available on the ABPath website. Candidates should always review the website for the most current information regarding application and registration deadlines.

Exams (Pearson VUE)	2026 Dates
Anatomic / Clinical Pathology	
Spring	May 11 - June 6
Fall	October 5-19
Subspecialty	
Blood Banking/Transfusion Medicine	September 8-28
Chemical Pathology	September 8-28
Cytopathology	September 8-28
Dermatopathology	September 8-28
Hematopathology	September 8-28
Forensic Pathology	September 8-28
Medical Microbiology	September 8-28
Molecular Genetic Pathology	September 8-28
Neuropathology	September 8-28
Pediatric Pathology	September 8-28
Clinical Informatics (Pearson VUE)	October TBA

ABPath is committed to supporting candidates throughout the certification process. We encourage candidates to plan early, use the resources provided, and reach out if questions arise.



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Chief Executive Officer

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questions@abpath.org



About the American Board of Pathology

The mission of the American Board of Pathology, as a member of the American Board of Medical Specialties, is to serve the public and advance the profession of pathology by setting certification standards and promoting lifelong competency of pathologists. Founded in 1936, the ABPath accomplishes this mission by establishing certification and continuing certification standards and assessing the qualifications of those seeking to obtain voluntary certification in the specialty of pathology.



Stay up to date with important news and information from ABPath. Visit abpath.org and follow us on social media.



Certified by the American Board of Pathology
Promoting Excellence in the Practice of Pathology