Pearson

PENNSYLVANIA COSMETOLOGY

CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

November 2026

QUICK REFERENCE

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF STATE, BUREAU OF PROFESSIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL AFFAIRS
STATE BOARD OF COSMETOLOGY

www.dos.pa.gov/cosmet
P.O. Box 2649, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2649

833-367-2762 | Toll Free: 1-833-DOS-BPOA
Hours of Operation 8:00 am – 5:00 pm M-F, Closed on Federal Holidays

Contact the State Board of Cosmetology to:

- Clarify information about licensure
- Obtain information regarding reciprocity from other States
- Obtain information on continued licensure
- Renew or reinstate a license that has been inactive for less than five years
- Obtain license verification

Go to www.pals.pa.gov to:

- Apply for licensure by reciprocity
- Verify if your Eligibility Requirements were received
- Change your current address or name after testing

Questions:

- Please submit a question by selecting the 'Create New Ticket' option from the webpage at: **https://www.pals.pa.gov/#/page/AnonymousSupportTicket**

PEARSON VUE® PENNSYLVANIA COSMETOLOGY

www.pearsonvue.com/pa/cosmetology
Attn: Regulatory Program Manager
5601 Green Valley Dr., Bloomington, MN 55437
(866) 638-7502
Monday–Friday 8am–11pm; Saturday 8am–5pm; Sunday 10am–4pm (Eastern Time Zone)

Go to Pearson VUE's website (www.pearsonvue.com/pa/cosmetology) to:

- Download a Candidate Handbook
- Make a real-time examination reservation
- View Frequently Asked Questions
- Download the Duplicate Score Report Form from the Candidate Handbook

Call or email (pearsonvuecustomerservice@pearson.com) Pearson VUE to:

- Schedule, cancel, or reschedule a Theory/Procedural Skill Examination
- Obtain information regarding your Score Report
- Obtain a copy of your Authorization to Test (ATT) letter
- Obtain information regarding your examination

Accommodation Requests (http://pearsonvue.com/accommodations):

- Request an accommodation for testing under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines

PEARSON VUE® OHT PROCESSING OFFICE

PO Box 1178
Dripping Springs, TX 78620
888-511-5352
Monday–Friday 8am–6pm (Eastern Time Zone)

Call to:

- Check on the status of your license application
- Change your current address or name ***before*** testing
- Clarify application instructions
- Verify if your application was submitted
- Verify if your Eligibility Requirements and transcripts were received
- Obtain a printed copy of the candidate handbook
- Obtain information on license requirements

STEPS TO LICENSURE

STEP 1: SUBMIT THE APPLICATION

Complete the *License Application* by logging in to the following website: www.pals.pa.gov

You can also find a link to the state's web site (and application) at: www.pearsonvue.com/pa/cosmetology

To submit your application for review, you must pay the application fee (effective 11/10/22) through PALS. If you have lived, worked, or obtained a school in Pennsylvania in the past 5 years, you will also need a Pennsylvania State Background Check. For information on background checks for PA and other states, please refer to the "Criminal History Check" Checklist item description in PALS for further instruction.

Notarized affidavits, photos, Valid ID, Proof of Education, Cosmetology School Transcripts and Criminal History Checks can be attached electronically to the PALS application.

STEP 2: RECEIVE ELIGIBILITY (FROM PALS) AND APPROVAL TO TEST NOTIFICATION (FROM PEARSON VUE)

Once applications are submitted along with the required documentation, Applicants will receive their exam eligibility letter (from PALS) via email, and an approval to test (ATT) email from Pearson VUE, which will detail steps for scheduling and paying for the Theory Examination. If you do not receive your authorization to test within 2 business days of receiving your exam eligibility letter, please call the Pearson VUE OHT processing Office at 888-511-5352.

Applicants **MUST** provide a valid email address in the application in order to receive important email communication.

STEP 3: SCHEDULE THE EXAMINATION

To schedule or reschedule and pay for an exam, create or log into your Pearson VUE account at: **https://home.pearsonvue.com/pa/cosmetology**. The applicant may take the examination at any given time within one year from the application authorization date. If the applicant is out-of-state and there is a reciprocal agreement, please refer to the reciprocity section of this handbook.

STEP 4: COMPLETE THE EXAMINATION

The candidate has an unlimited number of attempts to pass the Cosmetology Theory exam(s) within the allotted one-year exam authorization time period. However, if the candidate does not pass the examination, within the allotted one-year exam authorization time period, the candidate must submit a new application through PALS to be issued a new exam authorization. Any exam rescheduled during the active authorization time period will require the exam fee payment for each rescheduled exam.

STEP 5: LICENSURE

If the applicant has passed the examination (and has completed the required program of study), the state will issue the applicant's license. Passing exam results will be sent electronically from Pearson VUE to the State. The State will issue the applicant's license. To verify certification of a license, you may search the State's database at: **www.pals.pa.gov**, and then click on '**Verification/Certification of License**' in the left-hand navigation panel. If you cannot verify your license on PALS, or you do not receive your license in the mail within 10-15 days from your exam date, please call the Pearson VUE OHT Processing Office at 888-511-5352.

Note: If the candidate passes the exam under "Early Testing," a license will not be issued until the final transcripts and salon training certificate are received.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

QUICK REFERENCE .....INSIDE FRONT COVER

INTRODUCTION 1
- Exam Overview 1

ELIGIBILITY 1
- Eligibilty Requirements 1-2
- Required Documentation 2
- Reciprocity for Cosmetology 3
- Information on Reciprical States 3
- Reinstatement 3

APPLICATION AND SCHEDULING 3
- Completing the Application 3
- Application and Exam Fees 4
- ADA Accommodations 4
- Eligibility and Approval to Test Notice 4
- Scheduling Lead Times 5
- Test Sites 5

CANCELLATION AND RESCHEDULING 5
- Absence Policy 5
- Weather Emergencies 5

EXAM DAY 6
- What to Bring 6
- Acceptable Forms of Candidate Identification 6
- Palm Vein Recognition Technology 6
- Testing Policies 6
  - Lateness 6
  - Electronic Devices 6
  - Personal Belongings/Study Aids 6
  - Eating/Drinking/Smoking 6
  - Misconduct 7
  - Guests/Visitors 7

THE EXAM 7
- Theory/Procedural Skills Exam 7
- References 7

CONTENT OUTLINES 8–11

SCORE REPORTING 12
- Equating and Scaling 12
- Scaled Score 12
- Passing 12
- Failing and Retaking an Examination 12
- Duplicate Score Report 12

APPENDIX
- A: Request for Duplicate Score Report Form ..... back of handbook

Pearson VUE does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, creed, disabling condition, religion, national origin, or any other protected characteristics.

Copyright © 2026 Pearson Education, Inc., or its affiliate(s). All Rights Reserved.

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is for candidates who want to be licensed as cosmetologists, estheticians, and nail technicians, or teachers (in any of these professions) in Pennsylvania. It describes the steps you, the candidate, must follow to apply for and test. Please read this handbook in its entirety.

The Pennsylvania State Board of Cosmetology has contracted with Pearson VUE to manage the application process, as well as create, score, and report the results of the Theory/Procedural Skills Examination you must take to become licensed. The contact information (including web services) for Pearson VUE are listed in the Quick Reference on the inside front cover of this handbook.

EXAM OVERVIEW

The Examination consists of multiple-choice questions and is available for all license types in English. Candidates may also take the Cosmetologist, Esthetician, and Nail Technician examinations in Korean, Spanish, or Vietnamese. Content Outlines for the examinations can be found on pages 8 to 11 in this handbook.

Notice: Candidates are not required to take and pass a hands-on practical examination. Candidates are required to take and pass a computer based theory/procedural skills exam.

ELIGIBILITY

You must submit a License Application with supporting documentation and fees prior to being eligible to receive a temporary license and sit for the examination.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

EARLY TESTING

- Candidates for the examination to practice COSMETOLOGY are eligible to take the examination after completing 900 hours
- Candidates for the examination to practice ESTHETICS are eligible to take the examination after completing 250 hours
- Candidates for the examination to practice NAIL TECHNOLOGY are eligible to take the examination after completing 150 hours
- Candidates for the examination to practice NATURAL HAIR BRAIDING are eligible to take the examination after completing 250 hours
- Candidates for the examination to TEACH cosmetology, natural hair braiding, nail technology or esthetics are eligible to take the–examination after completion of 400 hours:

A temporary license may be issued to an applicant who is eligible for admission to the cosmetologist examination or to any limited license examination and who pays the examination fee set by the professional testing organization. If you have applied for the early examination, a temporary permit may still be issued to you. After passing the early exam, the license will be issued after proof of completed hours are submitted.

If candidates opt to take the examination early, transcripts will be required to show the minimum amount of hours needed to test.

PA-20-10 – COSMETOLOGIST

A candidate who wishes to obtain a cosmetology license must pass the examination. Before taking the examination:

- Successfully complete a course with at least 1,250 hours of instruction in a licensed school of cosmetology ***OR***
- Successfully complete 2,000 hours as an apprentice in a licensed salon. The candidate must contact the PA State Board to receive a letter with the State seal noting completion of 2,000 hours of apprenticeship. The candidate must attach the original letter with his or her application form. ***AND***
- Be at least 16 years old and have a 10th grade education or equivalent; ***OR***, waive the 10th grade education requirement by providing proof of being 35 years of age or older.

PA-20-14C – COSMETOLOGIST TEACHER, PA-20-14E – ESTHETICIAN TEACHER, AND PA-20-14M – NAIL TECHNICIAN TEACHER

A candidate who wishes to obtain a teacher license must pass the examination. Before taking these examinations, a candidate must:

- Successfully complete a course with at least 500 hours of instruction in cosmetology, esthetics, or nail technician teacher curriculum in a licensed school of cosmetology. ***AND***
- Possess a current Cosmetologist, Esthetics, or Nail Technician License. ***AND***
- Be at least 18 years old and have a 12th grade education or equivalent.

PA-20-13 – ESTHETICIAN

A candidate who wishes to obtain an esthetician license must pass the examination. Before taking the examination, a candidate must:

- Successfully complete a course with at least 300 hours of instruction in esthetics in a licensed school of cosmetology ***AND***
- Be at least 16 years old and have a 10th grade education or equivalent; ***OR***, waive the 10th grade education requirement by providing proof of being 35 years of age or older.

PA-20-12 – NAIL TECHNICIAN

A candidate who wishes to obtain a nail technician license must pass the examination. Before taking the examination, a candidate must:

- Successfully complete a course with at least 200 hours of instruction in nail technology in a licensed school of cosmetology ***AND***
- Be at least 16 years old and have a 10th grade education or equivalent; ***OR***, waive the 10th grade education requirement by providing proof of being 35 years of age or older.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

COSMETOLOGIST, ESTHETICIAN, NAIL TECHNICIAN, AND TEACHERS

Required Documentation (for Cosmetologist, Esthetician, and Nail Technician):

1. **Proof of Age:** (copy of your current, unexpired Driver's License, Birth Certificate, Visa, or Passport).
2. **Completed and Notarized Affidavit***
   *In lieu of a signed school affidavit, a certificate issued by the licensing board certifying school hours for a school which has closed is an acceptable alternative.
3. **Cosmetology School Transcript**:** An official school transcript must be submitted
   A. Cosmetology School Official transcript with school seal.
   **For Early Testing candidates: Final transcripts must be submitted once the program has been completed.
4. **Proof of High School Education:** (submit one of the following):
   A. Original high school diploma or acceptable GED points and diploma. (copies accepted).
   B. Official letter from school with original signature of principal or guidance counselor. Original letter mailed by school (copies not accepted).
      1. Home schooling documentation is acceptable if it follows the previously stated guidelines and is through an association currently registered with the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
   C. Original high school transcripts (copies not accepted).
      1. Home schooling documentation is acceptable if it follows the previously stated guidelines and is through an association currently registered with the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
   D. If you were educated outside of the United States, attach the following:
      1. An original evaluation of your education from any accredited evaluation service, a copy of what was evaluated, and a translated, notarized copy of what was evaluated (copies accepted by upload).
5. **Criminal History Record Information Check** (see notice on next page)

Recommended Services:

1. ACREVS, Inc.
1776 Clear Lake Ave., Milpitas, CA 95035-7014
E-mail: www.acrevs.com
Phone: 408-719-0015 **Fax:** 510-252-0876

2. Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc.
P.O. Box 514070, Milwaukee, WI 53203-3470
E-mail: www.ece.org
Phone: 414-289-3400 **Fax:** 414-289-3411

*An original acceptable GED points and diploma or TABE scores.

continues next page

NOTICE: The Pennsylvania State Board of Cosmetology requires all candidates to submit an official Criminal History Record Information check with their applications for licensure examinations, reactivation and reciprocity.
Applicants will need to supply an official Criminal History Record Information check from the State Police or other state agency for every state in which the candidate has resided during the past five years. The reports must be dated within ninety (90) days of the date of the application.

RECIPROCITY FOR COSMETOLOGY

There is reciprocity for cosmetology teacher licensees. However, it is not offered with all states. You may visit the Board's website at www.pals.pa.gov and review the instructions contained in the reciprocity application. Reciprocity agreements are subject to change, so please contact the board for verification.

- Reciprocal States: If you hold a current license for at least two years and you have two years active working experience in states with which Pennsylvania has a reciprocity agreement, you may by-pass the examination process. Contact the board at (717) 783-7130 or visit the Board's website: www.pals.pa.gov
- Non-Reciprocal States: If you hold a current license in a state where Pennsylvania DOES NOT have an understanding of reciprocity, you will be required to take and pass the examination. Please complete a cosmetology application.

FOR LICENSURE AS A **COSMETOLOGIST**

Pennsylvania does ***not*** have an understanding of reciprocity with Connecticut, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, or Utah.

FOR LICENSURE AS A **NAIL TECHNICIAN**

Pennsylvania does ***not*** have an understanding of reciprocity with Alabama, Connecticut, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, or West Virginia.

FOR LICENSURE AS AN **ESTHETICIAN**

Pennsylvania does ***not*** have an understanding of reciprocity with Connecticut, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, or Utah.

INFORMATION ON RECIPROCAL STATES

The reciprocity list is subject to change at any time. It is advisable to contact the Pennsylvania State Board prior to submission of an application, to ensure that the information is currently accurate.

REINSTATEMENT

- If you hold a Pennsylvania license that has not been active for more than five years, complete a reinstatement application or visit the Pearson VUE web site at www.pearsonvue.com/pa/cosmetology to print an application. You are required to take and pass the examination.
- If you hold a Pennsylvania license that has not been active for less than five years, contact the board at (717) 783-7130 or e-mail the board at: ra-cosmetology@pa.gov

APPLICATION AND SCHEDULING

COMPLETING AN APPLICATION

To become licensed in Pennsylvania, you must complete an *Application for Licensure*. You can begin the on-line application process by logging into the PALS system at: www.pals.pa.gov

Since you are the applicant, you must complete the application yourself. You may call a Pearson VUE OHT processing representative for assistance at 888-511-5352. You will need to attach other documents to the application. Please refer to the application to determine which additional documents you need to include. You must pay the application fee when you begin the application. If you fail to attach the required documents or fail to complete all required fields of the application, your application will be considered incomplete and you will receive an e-mail notification.

If you completed the electronic application and all required documents and payments have been received, you will receive an ELIGIBILITY notice via e-mail, along with an APPROVAL TO TEST notice with instructions on how to schedule and pay for your examination. If you need to reschedule your examination, you may do so by using web reservations on the Pearson VUE web site at http://www.pearsonvue.com/pa/cosmetology. Refer to the Cancellation and Rescheduling section in this handbook.

If you have submitted an incomplete application, you will be sent a LETTER OF DEFICIENCY via e-mail, specifying the outstanding requirements. Any outstanding requirements must be submitted within one (1) year of the application received date. After one (1) year, the application will expire and you will be required to complete a new application and pay the appropriate fees.

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

Candidates are required to respond to a series of background questions as part of the application process. Certain applications will need to be reviewed and approved by the State Board prior to candidates being approved to take the examination.

APPLICATION AND EXAM FEES

If you are taking the examinations for the first time, you must complete the correct application, the state application fee, the associated processing and supporting materials. Your Authorization to Test notice will contain details about how to schedule and pay for your examination.

EXAMINATION OR RETAKES	TOTAL FEE
Theory/Procedural Skills (First time or retakes)	$93

The state's application fee will be required when completing the on-line application form, through PALS. Fees cannot be refunded and cannot be transferred to another person. If you miss your examination, you are still responsible for the fee and must pay the rescheduling fee to schedule another examination.

Accepted forms of payment for the examination are: credit card, debit card, or voucher.

ADA ACCOMMODATIONS

Pearson VUE complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended. The purpose of accommodations is to provide candidates with full access to the test. Accommodations are not a guarantee of improved performance or test completion. Pearson VUE provides reasonable and appropriate accommodations to individuals with documented disabilities who demonstrate a need for accommodations.

Test accommodations may include things such as:

- A separate testing room
- Extra testing time
- A Reader or Recorder, for individuals with mobility or vision impairments and cannot read or write on their own

Test accommodations are individualized and considered on a case-by-case basis. All candidates who are requesting accommodations because of a disability must provide appropriate documentation of their condition and how it is expected to affect their ability to take the test under standard conditions. This may include:

- Supporting documentation from the professional who diagnosed the condition, including the credentials that qualify the professional to make this diagnosis
- A description of past accommodations the candidate has received

The steps to follow when requesting test accommodations vary, depending on your test program sponsor. To begin, go to http://pearsonvue.com/accommodations, and then select your test program sponsor from the alphabetized list. Candidates who have additional questions concerning test accommodations may contact the ADA Coordinator by e-mailing accommodationspearsonvue@pearson.com.

APPROVAL TO TEST NOTICE

When your application, application fee, transcripts, background questions, and other documents have been reviewed/ received and evaluated for completeness, you will receive a notice of eligibility and an approval to test notice via email. The approval to test notice contains details about how to schedule and pay for your examination.

You may not give your approval to test notice to another person.

If you do not get your approval to test notice within ten (10) business days after submitting your application, call the Pearson VUE OHT Processing Office. (Saturday, Sunday, and legal holidays are not business days.)

NOTE: Candidates who have responded "YES" to one of the background questions 3 through 7 may be asked to submit certified copies of relevant documents and should allow an additional 5-10 days for receipt of your authorization to test letter or notification from the Board regarding your application.

If your application is incomplete, or if you have not sent the correct fees or other documents, you will be sent a deficiency letter indicating that your application is incomplete. The e-mail will instruct you on what you still need to attach. An approval to test notice will not be sent until you have completed the on-line application and attached/submitted all of the required documents and payment.

Your approval to test notice has important information about the exam. Call the Pearson VUE OHT Processing Office at 888-511-5352 if you do not get your letter within five (5) business days after submitting your application and mailing your required documentation and payment. Pearson VUE is NOT responsible for lost, misdirected, or delayed mail.

SCHEDULING LEAD TIMES

You must schedule your exam at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance.

TEST SITES

The Exam will be given at a Pearson VUE computer-based testing facility. Once you have received your Authorization to Test notice, please schedule and pay for your test online by using the Pearson VUE web reservations site.

Testing sites and testing frequency are as follow:

Harrisburg	2-3 days per week
Philadelphia	4 days per week
Pittsburgh (East)	2-3 days per week
Pittsburgh (West)	2-3 days per week
Allentown	2-3 days per week
Erie	1 day per week
Plymouth Meeting	1-2 days per week
Scranton	2-3 days per week
Newark, DE	2-3 days per week
Morgantown, WV	2-3 days per week
Cumberland, MD	1 Saturday per month

State Correctional Inst. Muncy	Quarterly
State Correctional Inst. Cambridge	Quarterly
State Correctional Inst. Camp Hill	Quarterly
State Correctional Inst. Pittsburgh	Quarterly

CANCELLATION AND RESCHEDULING

If you cannot attend your Exam, you must contact Pearson VUE at least forty-eight (48) hours before the day of the exam to reschedule. If you do not attend your exam, and have not contacted Pearson VUE at least forty-eight (48) hours before the exam date, your exam fee will NOT be refunded and you cannot transfer the fee to another exam date. You may not give your exam date to another person.

ABSENCE POLICY

Candidates who are late or absent from an exam may call Pearson VUE within 14 days of the exam date to request an excused absence for the following reasons:

- Illness of yourself or an immediate family member
- Death in the family
- Disabling traffic accident
- Court appearance or jury duty
- Military duty
- Weather emergency

A case number will be assigned and instructions provided for emailing supporting documentation. Candidates absent from or late to an exam who have not changed or canceled the reservation according to the change/cancel policy will not be admitted to the exam and will forfeit the exam fee.

WEATHER EMERGENCIES

Exams may be delayed or cancelled if severe weather or a natural disaster makes the test site unsafe or impossible to reach. Candidates will be notified if the exam is cancelled and may take the exam on another day at no additional cost.

EXAM DAY

When you arrive for your scheduled examination, you must show your two forms of signature identification. One MUST be a government issued, unexpired, photo identification. In addition the names and signatures must match exactly. If you fail to provide these documents you will be denied admission to the examination and you will be liable for all fees.

If you have had a name change since submitting your application, you MUST request a NAME CHANGE PRIOR to arriving at the testing center. You must submit a request to the Pearson VUE OHT Processing Office at **PAapplications@oakhilltech.com**, along with a copy of the official documentation affecting the name change (example: marriage certificate or divorce decree). The signature and name on the IDs you present at the test center must match exactly to what was originally submitted, or updated, on your PALS application. Address and phone number changes can be personally completed by candidates in your PALS account.

WHAT TO BRING

You MUST bring the following items with you to the Examination test site:

- Two (2) forms of current (unexpired) signature-bearing identification. (One MUST be photo-bearing, see list below). ***PLEASE NOTE:*** The signature and names must match exactly to what was submitted on your application. If you come to the test site without the proper ID, you will not be allowed to take the exam and you will lose your exam fee.

No other materials will be allowed.

ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF CANDIDATE IDENTIFICATION

Candidates must present two (2) forms of current signature identification. The primary identification must be government-issued and photo-bearing with a signature, and the secondary identification must contain a valid signature. Identification must be in English. Note: Candidates are not permitted to enlist another individual (proxy) to test on their behalf

PRIMARY ID (PHOTOGRAPH AND SIGNATURE, NOT EXPIRED)

- Government-issued Driver's License
- U.S. Dept. of State Driver's License
- U.S. Learner's Permit (with photo and signature)
- National/State/Country ID card
- Passport
- Passport Card
- Military ID
- Military ID for spouses and dependents
- Alien Registration Card (Green Card, Permanent Resident Visa)

SECONDARY ID (SIGNATURE, NOT EXPIRED)

- U.S. Social Security card
- Debit (ATM) card
- Photo-bearing School ID
- Any form of ID on the Primary ID list

If the ID presented has an embedded signature that is not visible (microchip), or is difficult or impossible to read, the candidate must present another form of identification from the Primary ID or Secondary ID list that contains a visible signature.

Pearson VUE does not recognize grace periods. For example, if a candidate's driver's license expired yesterday and the state allows a 30-day grace period for renewing the ID, the ID is considered to be expired.

TESTING POLICIES

The following policies are observed at each test center:

LATENESS

Arrive at the test center thirty (30) minutes before your scheduled examination starts. If you are late for your scheduled examination, or do not bring all of your required materials, you will NOT be allowed to test and your examination fee will NOT be returned (see *Cancellation* for more details).

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Cellular phones, pagers or any other electronic devices are not permitted to be used and must be turned off during testing. There is no place for storage of personal belongings at the test centers.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS/STUDY AIDS

You are not permitted to take personal belongings such as briefcases, large bags, study materials, extra books or papers into the examination room. Any such materials brought into the examination room will be collected and returned to you when you have completed the examination. Pearson VUE is not responsible for lost or misplaced items.

EATING/DRINKING/SMOKING

You are not permitted to eat, drink, or smoke during the examination.

MISCONDUCT

If you cause a disturbance of any kind or engage in any kind of misconduct, you will be dismissed from the examination and the incident will be reported to the Pennsylvania State Board of Cosmetology. Decisions regarding disciplinary measures are the responsibility of the Pennsylvania State Board of Cosmetology.

GUESTS/VISITORS

Guests, visitors, pets, interpreters, or children are NOT allowed at the test centers.

THE EXAM

THEORY/PROCEDURAL SKILLS EXAM

The examination will consist of two parts: a state-specific test and a general theory test. The state-specific portion is referenced to the Regulations, Act 86 of 1933, and Act 48 of 1993 (Schedule of Civil Penalties) which can be found on the Board's website. Topics will cover all areas of the aforementioned regulations/law and are not specific to license types. The general theory test is specific to the license type and will follow the content outline noted for that exam.

The examination will consist of multiple choice questions and "pretest" questions. (Pretest questions are questions on which information is being collected for use in making future exams. Your answers to pretest questions do not affect your score. Pretest questions are mixed in with the scored questions and are not identified.) The chart below identifies how many items you will see for both the general and state portion as well as the total time allotted for each examination.

Examination	Total Items	Scored Items	Pre-test Items	Exam Time Allotted
Cosmetologist	135	110	25	2 hours 15 min
Nail Technician	75	60	15	1 hour 45 min
Esthetician	100	85	15	1 hour 45 min
Teacher	75	60	15	1 hour 45 min

If you give help to someone or receive help from anyone during the exam, you will be asked to leave the room immediately. The results will not be scored and the incident will be reported to the Pennsylvania State Board of Cosmetology. Anyone who takes or tries to take materials or information from the testing room is subject to prosecution.

The examinations are offered in the following languages:

Exam	languages offered
Cosmetologist	English, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese (Simplified)
Esthetician	English, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese (Simplified)
Instructor	English
Nail Technician	English, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese (Simplified)

All exam questions, each form of the exam, and all other exam materials are copyrighted by and the property of Pearson VUE. Any distribution of the exam content or materials through any form of reproduction, or through oral or written communication, is strictly prohibited and punishable by law. Anyone who removes or tries to remove exam material or information from the test site will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

REFERENCES

PA LAWS & REGULATIONS (available on the board's website)

- Cosmetology Regulations: Title 49, Chp 7
- Act 86 of 1933
- Act 48 of 1993 (Schedule of Civil Penalties)

COSMETOLOGIST THEORY

- Milady Standard Cosmetology (14th ed.), 2023
- Pivot Point Fundamentals: Cosmetology 101-113 (1st ed.), 2016
- Salon Fundamentals: Cosmetology (3rd ed.), 2015

ESTHETICIAN THEORY

- Milady Standard Esthetics Fundamentals (12th ed.), 2020
- Pivot Point Fundamentals: Esthetics 101E-111E(1st ed.), 2020

TEACHER THEORY

- Milady Professional Educator (4th ed.), 2022
- Pivot Point Fundamentals: Mindful Teaching (2nd ed.), 2025
- Milady Master Educator (3rd ed.), 2014
- Pivot Point: Mindful Teaching Pro, 2013

NAIL TECHNICIAN THEORY

- Milady Standard Nail Technology (8th ed.), 2021
- Salon Fundamentals: Nails (1st ed.), 2007

THEORY/PROCEDURAL SKILLS EXAM CONTENT OUTLINES

Note: State-specific content is referenced to the Regulations, Act 86 of 1933, and Act 48 of 1993 (Schedule of Civil Penalties) which can be found on the **Board's website**, and does not reflect the temporary waivers in effect due to the Governor's emergency declaration related to COVID-19.

CONTENT OUTLINE — COSMETOLOGIST

110 scored items (100 general, 10 state)
25 pretest items (20 general, 5 state)

I. Rules, Regulations, and Safety (27% to 32%)

A. Safety
   1. Draping
      a. Sanitation
      b. Procedures
   2. Prevention of salon accidents
      a. Maintaining safe working conditions
      b. Labeling
      c. Storing chemical products
      d. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)/ Safety Data Sheets (SDS)
      e. Implements/tools
   3. First aid/OSHA
      a. Handling blood-contaminated tools
      b. Disposing of blood-contaminated objects

B. Sanitation and disinfection
   1. Personal hygiene
   2. Implements and tools
   3. Single-use items
   4. Dispensing products
   5. Identifying infectious disease/referral
   6. Work surfaces

C. Client contact & communication
   1. Ethics
   2. Consultation
   3. Record keeping

II. Trichology (5% to 8%)

A. Structure of hair

B. Hair type
   1. Pigment
   2. Wave pattern/follicle formation
   3. Texture
   4. Density
   5. Porosity
   6. Elasticity

C. Hair growth phases

III. Shampoo / Scalp Analysis (4% to 6%)

A. Purpose and chemistry of shampoos and conditioners

B. Scalp conditioning services

C. Procedures

D. Scalp massage

E. Scalp analysis/Disorders and diseases of scalp

F. Procedures for clients with special needs

IV. Styling (5% to 8%)

A. Determination of appropriate hair style
   1. Hair texture and types/Hair analysis
   2. Hair length
   3. Face shape

B. Hair design techniques
   1. Wet styling
   2. Comb out
   3. Blow-dry styling

C. Thermal styling
   1. Special considerations
   2. Tools
   3. Procedures

D. Artificial hair

E. Products and styling aids

V. Haircutting (9% to 11%)

A. Shaping and cutting principles

B. Determination of appropriate haircut
   1. Length, structure, and conditions
   2. Establishing guideline

C. Blunt/one-length, graduated, and layered haircuts
   1. Elevation
   2. Sectioning/parting

D. Thinning/texturizing

E. Using a razor

F. Using clippers/trimmers

G. Using scissors/shears

VI. Haircolor & Lightening (13% to 15%)

A. Scalp and hair conditions that preclude haircoloring or lightening services

B. Effects of hair structure and natural hair color on tone and intensity of outcome

C. Preparing hair to receive haircoloring or lightening services
   1. Patch test
   2. Strand test

D. Determining color level and tone/color theory

E. Products

F. Tools, implements, and materials

G. Formulation
H. Application, processing, and removal
I. Highlighting techniques
J. Corrective color
K. Special considerations
   1. Overprocessed or damaged hair
   2. Hair with metallic-based, compound-based, or mineral-based color

VII. Permanent Waving (12% to 14%)

A. Scalp and hair conditions that preclude permanent waving services
B. Effects of hair structure and condition on desired outcome
C. Preparation
D. Products
E. Tools, implements, and materials
F. Applying, processing, and removing products
G. Techniques of wrapping hair with rods and other tools
H. Special considerations
   1. Over processed or damaged hair
   2. Hair with metallic-based, compound-based, or mineral-based color
   3. Test curl

VIII. Chemical Straightening and Relaxing (12% to 14%)

A. Scalp and hair conditions that preclude chemical straightening and relaxing services
B. Effects of hair structure on desired outcome
C. Preparation
D. Products
E. Tools, implements, and procedures
F. Applying, processing, and removing products for chemical straightening and relaxing
G. Curl reformation/soft curl perm
H. Keratin-based smoothing treatments
I. Special considerations
   1. Overprocessed or damaged hair
   2. Hair with metallic-based, compound-based, or mineral-based color
   3. Strand test

IX. Esthetics (5% to 7%)

A. Skin conditions that preclude esthetic services
B. Skin conditions that benefit from esthetic services
C. Skin diseases and disorders
D. Special procedures for skin services on sensitive, acne-prone, or aging skin
E. Preparation
F. Tools, implements, and materials
G. Facial services
   1. Purpose and procedures
   2. Types of products
   3. Applying and removing products
   4. Using electric skin devices and equipment
   5. Extractions
H. Massage manipulations
I. Makeup application
   1. Procedures
   2. Products
   3. Removal
   4. Corrective makeup
   5. Color theory
J. Hair removal
   1. Waxing and other depilatory techniques
   2. Eyebrow shaping with tweezers

X. Nails (5% to 7%)

A. Nail structure
B. Recognizing nail disorders and diseases
C. Clients' health conditions that preclude service
D. Massage
E. Manicure/Pedicure
   1. Products
   2. Procedures
   3. Tools, implements, and materials
F. Applying, maintaining, and removing nail enhancements/artificial nails

CONTENT OUTLINE — NAIL TECHNICIAN (MANICURIST)

60 scored items (50 general, 10 state)
15 pretest items (10 general, 5 state)

I. Rules, Regulations, and Safety (30% to 40%)

A. Safety
   1. Preparation
      a. Sanitation
      b. Procedures
   2. Prevention of salon accidents
      a. Maintaining safe working conditions
      b. Labeling
      c. Storing chemical products
      d. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)/ Safety Data Sheets (SDS)

B. Sanitation and disinfection
   1. Personal hygiene
   2. Implements and tools
   3. Single-use items
   4. Applying creams
   5. Prevention of infectious disease
   6. Cleaning and disinfecting work surfaces
   7. Cleaning and disinfecting whirlpool pedicure foot tubs and filters

C. Client contact
   1. Ethics
   2. Communication
   3. Record keeping

II. Nail Structure and Nail Analysis (15% to 20%)

A. Nail structure

B. Nail conditions that preclude treatment

C. Health conditions that preclude treatment

III. Professional Services (30% to 40%)

A. Massage
   1. Muscles, bones, and nerves of fingers/hands/ arms
   2. Muscles, bones, and nerves of toes/feet/legs

B. Manicure/Pedicure
   1. Products
      a. Disposal
      b. Handling
   2. Procedures
   3. Tools, equipment, and materials
   4. Preparing hands and feet for services
   5. Conditioning nails and cuticles
   6. Basic manicure/pedicure
      a. Grooming and trimming cuticles
      b. Buffing
      c. Shaping
      d. Polishing

IV. Nail Enhancements (12% to 18%)

A. Application and removal
   1. Nail tips
   2. Gels and acrylics

B. Tools, equipment, and products

C. Maintenance

D. Nail Repair

CONTENT OUTLINE — ESTHETICIAN

85 scored items (75 general, 10 state)
15 pretest items (10 general, 5 state)

I. Rules, Regulations, and Safety (30% to 40%)

A. Safety
   1. Draping
      a. Sanitation
      b. Procedures
   2. Prevention of salon accidents
      a. Maintaining safe working conditions
      b. Labeling
      c. Storing chemical products
      d. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)/ Safety Data Sheets (SDS)
      e. Thermal/electrical appliances
   3. First aid/OSHA
      a. Handling blood-contaminated tools
      b. Disposing of blood-contaminated objects

B. Sanitation and disinfection
   1. Personal hygiene
   2. Sanitation and disinfection of implements and tools
   3. Single use items
   4. Product application
   5. Sanitation and disinfection of work surfaces

C. Predisposition/Patch Tests

D. Client contact
   1. Ethics
   2. Communication
   3. Record keeping

II. Esthetic Science and Skin Analysis (15% to 20%)

A. Skin structure and anatomy

B. Purpose of skin analysis

C. Skin conditions that benefit from services

D. Skin conditions that preclude skin services

E. Skin disorders and diseases

III. Facials (20% to 25%)

A. Application, removal, and purpose of products
   1. Lotions and creams
   2. Exfoliants
   3. Masks/packs

B. Tools, implements, materials, and equipment

C. Facial procedures

D. Special considerations
   1. Microdermabrasion
   2. Disincrustation
   3. Aromatherapy

E. Massage/Anatomy

IV. Hair Removal (16% to 20%)

A. Tweezing

B. Waxing

C. Tools, implements, materials, and equipment

V. Makeup (10% to 15%)

A. Purpose

B. Types of cosmetics

C. Brushes and other implements, tools, and materials

D. Color theory

E. Application and removal procedures

F. Corrective makeup

G. Application and removal of artificial eyelashes

VI. Electricity and Electrotherapy (5% to 10%)

A. Galvanic current

B. High frequency current

C. Light therapy

CONTENT OUTLINE — TEACHER

60 scored items (50 general, 10 state)
15 pretest items (10 general, 5 state)

I. Determining Effective Instruction (50%)

A. Establishing goals and objectives

B. Determining essential knowledge, skills, and abilities

C. Teaching Methods and instructional tools

D. Understanding outcomes

E. Salon Management

II. The Learner and Learning Environment (34%)

A. Learning styles

B. Individual differences/Motivation

C. Record keeping

D. Classroom Management (incl. behavior)

III. Assessment Tools (16%)

A. Purpose

B. Methods

C. Content

SCORE REPORTING

Pearson VUE will provide you with your official examination results on the day of testing. If you lose your examination results and need to obtain another copy, please complete the form in the back of the handbook and submit your request for a duplicate score report. Examination results will not be given over the telephone nor can they be sent to your employer or to another third party.

EQUATING AND SCALING

There are multiple versions of each of the licensing examinations. These versions are known as forms. Although all forms of an examination are developed based on the content outlines, the difficulty of the forms of an examination may vary slightly because different questions appear on each form. To ensure that no candidate is put at an unfair advantage or disadvantage due to the particular form of an examination that he or she is given, a statistical procedure known as equating is used to correct for differences in form difficulty.

For example, in an examination with two (2) forms, Form A and Form B, the state licensing agency determines that answering 30 questions correctly on Form A demonstrates the minimum amount of knowledge necessary to be licensed. It is further determined through the equating process that Form B contains slightly more difficult questions than Form A; therefore, answering 30 questions correctly on Form A would indicate the same level of knowledge as answering only 28 questions correctly on Form B. Under this set of circumstances, a score of 30 questions correct would be used as the passing score on Form A whereas a score of 28 questions correct would be used as the passing score on Form B.

A second statistical procedure known as scaling is used to derive the numerical score to report for each candidate. Scaling is used to place a raw score on a common reporting scale on which each scaled score represents a given level of knowledge regardless of the difficulty of the form on which the raw score was achieved.

To illustrate how scaling works, suppose that in the examination example used above, the state licensing agency decides to use a score of 500 as the passing score for reporting purposes. (Note that the score selected to be used as the reported passing score is not related to, and has no bearing on, the difficulty of the examination.) Based on the information provided above, a raw score of 30 on Form A would translate to a scaled score of 500; a raw score of 28 on Form B would also translate to a scaled score of 500 since a raw score of 30 on Form A represents the same level of knowledge as a raw score of 28 on Form B.

SCALED SCORE

The passing scores of the licensing examinations were set by the Pennsylvania State Board of Cosmetology (in conjunction with Pearson VUE) after a comprehensive study was completed for each examination. Raw scores are converted into scaled scores that can range from 0 to 100. To avoid misuse of score information, numeric scores are only reported to failing candidates. The scaled score that is reported to you is neither the number of questions you answered correctly nor the percentage of questions you answered correctly. With a passing score of 75, any score below 75 indicates how close the candidate came to passing, rather than the actual number or percentage of questions the candidates answered correctly.

PASSING

After you have successfully passed the Examination (and have completed the required hours), the State Board will issue your license within 10-15 business days. If you have not received your license in the mail within ten (10) business days of passing the examination, please contact the Pearson VUE OHT Processing Office at 888-511-5352.

Note: If you have passed the exam under "Early Testing," the results will not be sent to the state until the final transcripts are received.

To verify whether or not a license has been issued, an applicant may search the State's web site using the following link: https://www.pals.pa.gov/#/page/search

FAILING AND RETAKING AN EXAMINATION

If you fail the Examination, your Score Report will provide you with information on how to re-take the examination. A new examination fee is required each time you re-take the examination.

To schedule a retake examination, use the web reservations on the Pearson VUE web site at http://www.pearsonvue.com/pa/cosmetology. Reservations for reexamination cannot be made at the test center, and you must wait twenty-four (24) hours from your failed examination before making your reservation.

DUPLICATE SCORE REPORT

If you lose your Score Report or need a duplicate Score Report, complete the *Request for Duplicate Score Report Form* and mail it to Pearson VUE (see *Appendix A*).

APPENDIX A

Pennsylvania Barber and Cosmetology

REQUEST FOR DUPLICATE SCORE REPORT

DIRECTIONS: You may use this form to ask Pearson VUE for a copy of your Examination Score Report. Please print or type all information on this form, or your request will be returned.

SEND TO: Pearson VUE/Cosmetology Program
Duplicate Score Request
5601 Green Valley Drive
Bloomington, MN 55437

or email the request to:
pearsonvuecustomerservice@pearson.com

Please complete the following form with your current name and address. All information must be complete and accurate to ensure proper processing.

Name _____

Street _____

City_____ State _____
Zip _____
Tel. (_____)_____ The last four (4) digits of your Social Security Number _____

Name of Exam _____ Theory or Practical (circle one) _____
Exam Date _____

If the above information was different at the time you were tested, please indicate original information. If your name has changed, you must attach a copy of a legal document authorizing the change (for example, a marriage certificate or a divorce decree).

Name _____

Street _____

City_____ State _____ Zip_____ Tel. (_____)_____

I hereby authorize Pearson VUE to send me at the address above a duplicate of my score report.

Your Signature_____
Date _____

TEST SITES

The Exam will be given at a Pearson VUE computer-based testing facility.

Once you have received your Authorization to Test notice, please schedule your test on-line by using the Pearson VUE web reservations site at:
www.pearsonvue.com/pa/cosmetology

Testing sites and testing frequency are as follow:

Testing site location	testing frequency
Harrisburg	2-3 days per week
Philadelphia	4 days per week
Pittsburgh (East)	2-3 days per week
Pittsburgh (West)	2-3 days per week
Allentown	2-3 days per week
Erie	1 day per week
Plymouth Meeting	1-2 days per week
Scranton	2-3 days per week
Newark, DE	2-3 days per week
Morgantown, WV	2-3 days per week
Cumberland, MD	1 Saturday per month

EXAMINATIONS

Examination	Total Items	Scored Items	Pre-test Items	Exam Time Allotted
Cosmetologist	135	110	25	2 hours 15 min
Nail Technician	75	60	15	1 hour 45 min
Esthetician	100	85	15	1 hour 45 min
Teacher	75	60	15	1 hour 45 min

Note: Early Testing candidates will not receive a license until the required education hours are completed and submitted.