



BUSINESS, CONSUMER SERVICES, AND HOUSING AGENCY • GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR  
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## MEMORANDUM

<b>DATE</b>	November 21, 2025
<b>TO</b>	Board Approved School Owners and Administrators
<b>FROM</b>	The Board of Barbering and Cosmetology
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Notification of Update to Examinations

### **Examinations Update**

The Board of Barbering and Cosmetology (Board) is reaching out to inform you of an update to the national examinations for Cosmetology, Esthetician, Nail Technician/Manicurist, and Electrologist examinations that will be implemented on April 1, 2026. It is crucial that you, your staff, and instructors review the below and enclosed information.

The Board's examination vendor, PSI, has completed a new Validation Study, the results of this study served as a basis for updating the content outlines, developing new items, reviewing the entire item bank, and establishing new standards to ensure relevance to the Barber and Cosmetology examinations nationwide.

In accordance with the memo, below you will find the updated outlines along with a comparison to the 2020 outlines. Schools are encouraged to review these outlines and make any necessary adjustments to your training plans.

**Again, these changes to the exam will not go into effect until April 1, 2026.**

Please contact Board's School's Desk with any questions at [BBCSchools@dca.ca.gov](mailto:BBCSchools@dca.ca.gov).

## National Barber/Cosmetology Theory Content Outline Comparisons

National Barber Theory Examination	% Comparison	
	2020	2025
<b>Topic Area</b>		
Safety and Infection Control	29%	31%
Client Consultation and Hair and Skin Analysis (Hair, Scalp, and Skin Analysis) *	13%	15%
Hairstyling	5%	5%
Haircutting	9%	8%
Haircoloring (previously included in Chemical Services)	0%	7%
Chemical Texture Services (Chemical Services) *	18%	7%
Skin Care	2%	5%
Shaving	24%	22%

*\*Current topic area name is shown in parentheses if changed in the new examination.*

National Cosmetologist Theory Examination	% Comparison	
	2020	2025
<b>Topic Area</b>		
Safety and Infection Control	25%	30%
Client Consultation and Hair, Skin, and Nail Analysis (Hair, Scalp, Skin, and Nail Analysis) *	17%	19%
Hairstyling	6%	2%
Haircutting	12%	3%
Haircoloring (previously included in Chemical Services)	0%	10%
Chemical Texture Services (Chemical Services) *	15%	12%
Skin Care	6%	4%
Eyelash and Eyebrow	0%	4%
Hair Removal	4%	8%
Nail Care (Nails) *	13%	8%

*\*Current topic area name is shown in parentheses if changed in the new examination.*

<b>National Esthetician Theory Examination</b>		<b>% Comparison</b>	
<b>Topic Area</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	
Safety and Infection Control	34%	40%	
Client Consultation and Skin Analysis	17%	19%	
Skin Care	27%	17%	
Makeup	4%	3%	
Eyelash and Eyebrow	0%	6%	
Hair Removal	13%	15%	

*\*Current topic area name is shown in parentheses if changed in the new examination.*

<b>National Nail Technician/Manicurist Theory Examination</b>		<b>% Comparison</b>	
<b>Topic Area</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	
Safety and Infection Control	38%	50%	
Client Consultation and Nail Analysis	13%	18%	
Skin Care	0%	10%	
Nail Care (Nails) *	49%	22%	

*\*Current topic area name is shown in parentheses if changed in the new examination.*

<b>National Electrologist Theory Examination</b>		<b>% Comparison</b>	
<b>Topic Area</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	
Safety and Infection Control	40%	36%	
Client Consultation and Hair and Skin Analysis	20%	30%	
Electrolysis Treatment and Analysis (Analysis and Treatment/Electricity and Equipment) *	40%	34%	

*\*Current topic area name is shown in parentheses if changed in the new examination.*

## APPENDIX A

### 2025 National Barber/Cosmetology Theory Examinations Content Outlines

<b>Barber Theory Examination General Portion</b>	
95 Questions (85 scored, 10 non-scored)	
2 hours (120 minutes)	
Topic Name	Weight
<b>1. Safety and Infection Control</b>	<b>31%</b>
A. Workplace Infection Control Procedures	
1. Infectious diseases, pathogens, and exposure prevention	
2. Methods and procedures for cleaning and disinfection	
a. Contaminated tools	
b. Machines and equipment	
c. Daily workstation	
3. Levels of decontamination (i.e., cleaning, disinfection, sterilization)	
4. Procedures for exposure incidents (e.g., Standard/Universal Precautions, OSHA, CDC)	
5. Products to be used for cleaning and disinfecting	
6. Labeling and storage of cleaned and disinfected tools and equipment	
7. Single- and multi-use items and materials	
B. Workplace Safety Precautions	
1. Procedures for maintaining safe working conditions	
2. Safe water temperature	
3. Safe use of equipment and maintenance procedures	
4. Labeling and storage of materials and chemicals	
5. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and prohibited materials and substances	
6. Federal safety regulations (e.g., OSHA, EPA, FDA)	
7. Identifying adverse reactions to chemicals	
8. Protective chemical barriers and draping for clients	
9. Proper ventilation	
10. Electrical safety	

<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>2. Client Consultation and Hair and Skin Analysis</b>	<b>15%</b>
A. Client Consultation	
1. Client intake and consent form procedures to determine possible contraindications	
2. Declining or altering service based on contraindications	
3. Recommendation client seek a medical opinion	
B. Hair and Skin	
1. Hair and skin structure	
2. Hair and skin analysis	
3. Selection of appropriate services based on condition of hair and skin	
C. Adverse Reactions, Diseases, Contraindications	
1. Allergic reaction (patch) test procedures	
2. Hair and scalp diseases and disorders	
3. Skin diseases and disorders	
4. Signs of adverse reactions to products during and after service	
<b>3. Hairstyling</b>	<b>5%</b>
A. Hairstyling Procedures	
1. Procedures for textured hairstyling	
a. Hair extension application, maintenance, removal	
b. Locking	
c. Braiding	
2. Procedures for hair additions, replacements, and enhancements	
a. Hair piece application, maintenance, removal	
3. Blowdrying procedures	
4. Thermal curling procedures	
B. Hairstyling Tools	
1. Precautions for use of thermal styling tools (e.g., testing temperature, protecting scalp)	

<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>4. Haircutting</b>	<b>8%</b>
A. Haircutting Procedures	
1. Procedures for cutting different hair types (e.g., straight, curly, over-curly, and wavy)	
B. Tool and Implement Safety	
1. Safe use of haircutting tools and implements (e.g., shears, razors, clippers, and trimmers)	
<b>5. Haircoloring</b>	<b>7%</b>
A. Application	
1. Application of haircoloring chemicals for all hair types	
2. Purpose and procedure of strand testing	
3. Hair and scalp preparation	
4. Application of haircoloring chemicals to facial hair (e.g., eyebrows, mustache, beard)	
B. Safe Use of Chemicals and Products	
1. Hair chemical mixing and safety	
2. Application procedures and safe use of color (e.g., overprocessed hair, metallic or compound dyes, minerals)	
3. Application procedures and safe use of lightening products	
4. Color theory, formulating, and products	
<b>6. Chemical Texture Services</b>	<b>7%</b>
A. Virgin Hair	
1. Safe application and removal for virgin hair (e.g., chemical relaxer, chemical texturing products, permanent waving products)	
B. Chemically Treated Hair	
1. Safe application and removal for chemically treated hair (e.g., chemical relaxer, chemical texturing products, permanent waving products)	
C. Chemical Safety, Products, and Results	
1. Assessing chemical process results	
2. Safe use of chemical texturing products	
3. Precautions for chemical hair texturing	

<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>7. Skin Care</b>	<b>5%</b>
A. Massage	
1. Safe facial massage movements	
B. Preparation, Products, and Services	
1. Preparing client for skin care services	
2. Use of different skin care products	
3. Scalp care treatments	
C. Skin Care Safety	
1. Safe procedures for performing cleansing facials	
2. Safe procedures for chemical and mechanical exfoliation	
3. Safe use of skin care tools, machines, and devices	
4. Safe application and removal of hot towels	
5. Safe product use and application for all skin conditions	
<b>8. Shaving</b>	<b>22%</b>
A. Shaving Safety	
1. Contraindications of shaving	
2. Shaving different facial hair types and textures	
3. Safe shaving procedures (i.e., stretching the skin and direction of the stroke)	
4. Safe razor handling	
5. Safe shaving around the mouth and ears	
B. Shaving Products and Strokes	
1. Shaving products and application (e.g., lather, bracer)	
2. Freehand, backhand, reverse freehand and reverse backhand shaving strokes	
C. Shaving Tools and Equipment	
1. Safe use of shaving tools and equipment	
2. Maintenance of shaving tools and equipment	
3. Blade disposal	

<b>Cosmetologist Theory Examination General Portion</b>	
110 Questions (100 scored, 10 non-scored)	
2 hours (120 minutes)	
<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>1. Safety and Infection Control</b>	<b>30%</b>
A. Workplace Infection Control Procedures	
1. Infectious diseases, pathogens, and exposure prevention	
2. Methods and procedures for cleaning and disinfection	
a. Contaminated tools	
b. Machines and equipment	
c. Daily workstation	
3. Levels of decontamination (i.e., cleaning, disinfection, sterilization)	
4. Procedures for exposure incidents (e.g., Standard/Universal Precautions, OSHA, CDC)	
5. Products to be used for cleaning and disinfecting	
6. Labeling and storage of cleaned and disinfected tools and equipment	
7. Single- and multi-use items and materials	
B. Workplace Safety Precautions	
1. Procedures for maintaining safe working conditions	
2. Safe water temperature	
3. Safe use of equipment and maintenance procedures	
4. Labeling and storage of materials and chemicals	
5. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and prohibited materials and substances	
6. Federal safety regulations (e.g., OSHA, EPA, FDA)	
7. Identifying adverse reactions to chemicals	
8. Protective chemical barriers and draping for clients	
9. Proper ventilation	
10. Electrical safety	

<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>2. Client Consultation and Hair, Skin, and Nail Analysis</b>	<b>19%</b>
A. Client Consultation	
1. Client intake and consent form procedures to determine possible contraindications	
2. Declining or altering service based on contraindications	
3. Recommendation client seek a medical opinion	
B. Hair, Skin, and Nail	
1. Hair, skin, and nail structure	
2. Hair, skin, and nail analysis	
3. Selection of appropriate services based on condition of hair, skin, and nails	
C. Adverse Reactions, Diseases, Contraindications	
1. Allergic reaction (patch) test procedures	
2. Hair and scalp diseases and disorders	
3. Skin diseases and disorders	
4. Nail diseases and disorders	
5. Signs of adverse reactions to products during and after service	
6. Contraindications to manicure and pedicure services	
7. Contraindications to nail enhancement services	
<b>3. Hairstyling</b>	<b>2%</b>
A. Hairstyling Procedures	
1. Procedures for textured hairstyling	
a. Hair extension application, maintenance, removal	
b. Locking	
c. Braiding	
2. Procedures for hair additions, replacements, and enhancements	
a. Hair piece application, maintenance, removal	
3. Blowdrying procedures	
4. Thermal curling procedures	
B. Hairstyling Tools	
1. Precautions for use of thermal styling tools (e.g., testing temperature, protecting scalp)	

<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>4. Haircutting</b>	<b>3%</b>
A. Haircutting Procedures	
1. Procedures for cutting different hair types (e.g., straight, curly, over-curly, and wavy)	
B. Tool and Implement Safety	
1. Safe use of haircutting tools and implements (e.g., shears, razors, clippers, and trimmers)	
<b>5. Haircoloring</b>	<b>10%</b>
A. Application	
1. Application of haircoloring chemicals for all hair types	
2. Purpose and procedure of strand testing	
3. Hair and scalp preparation	
4. Application of haircoloring chemicals to facial hair (e.g., eyebrows, eyelashes)	
B. Safe Use of Chemicals and Products	
1. Hair chemical mixing and safety	
2. Application procedures and safe use of color (e.g., overprocessed hair, metallic or compound dyes, minerals)	
3. Application procedures and safe use of lightening products	
4. Color theory, formulating, and products	
<b>6. Chemical Texture Services</b>	<b>12%</b>
A. Virgin Hair	
1. Safe application and removal for virgin hair (e.g., chemical relaxer, chemical texturing products, permanent waving products)	
B. Chemically Treated Hair	
1. Safe application and removal for chemically treated hair (e.g., chemical relaxer, chemical texturing products, permanent waving products)	
C. Chemical Safety, Products, and Results	
1. Assessing chemical process results	
2. Safe use of chemical texturing products	
3. Precautions for chemical hair texturing	

<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>7. Skin Care</b>	<b>4%</b>
A. Massage	
1. Safe facial massage movements	
2. Safe manicure and pedicure massage movements	
B. Preparation, Products, and Services	
1. Preparing client for skin care services	
2. Use of different skin care products	
3. Scalp care treatments	
C. Skin Care Safety	
1. Safe procedures for performing facial services	
2. Safe procedures for chemical and mechanical exfoliation	
3. Safe use of skin care tools, machines, and devices	
4. Safe application and removal of hot towels	
5. Safe product use and application for all skin conditions	
6. Safe removal of calluses	
<b>8. Eyelash and Eyebrow</b>	<b>4%</b>
A. Eyelash and Eyebrow Safety	
1. Safe application and removal of eyelash enhancements	
2. Safe application procedures for chemical eyelash services	
B. Products and Procedures	
1. Safe use of eyebrow and eyelash tinting products	
2. Safety procedures for artificial eyelash adhesive and remover products	
<b>9. Hair Removal</b>	<b>8%</b>
A. Hair Removal Safety	
1. Safe hair removal using depilatories, waxing, and sugaring	
2. Safe hair removal using tweezing and threading	
3. Tools, supplies, and products for hair removal	
B. Infection Control (e.g., cross-contamination, wearing gloves)	
C. Contraindications to Hair Removal Services	

Topic Name	Weight
<b>10. Nail Care</b>	<b>8%</b>
A. Nail Safety	
1. Safe use of nail products, tools, and equipment	
2. Safe filing and buffing of nails	
3. Safe cuticle removal	
4. Safe manicure and pedicure procedures	
B. Nail Workstation and Environment	
1. Nail station ventilation (e.g., particulate matter control)	
2. Nail infection control procedures (e.g., closing multi-use containers while clipping and filing, clean files and buffers)	
C. Nail Enhancements	
1. Natural nail products, procedures, and repair	
2. Artificial nail enhancement products, application, maintenance, and repair	
3. Artificial nail removal	

<b>Esthetician Theory Examination General Portion</b>	
85 Questions (75 scored, 10 non-scored)	
1.5 hours (90 minutes)	
<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>1. Safety and Infection Control</b>	<b>40%</b>
A. Workplace Infection Control Procedures	
1. Infectious diseases, pathogens, and exposure prevention	
2. Methods and procedures for cleaning and disinfection	
a. Contaminated tools	
b. Machines and equipment	
c. Daily workstation	
3. Levels of decontamination (i.e., cleaning, disinfection, sterilization)	
4. Procedures for exposure incidents (e.g., Standard/Universal Precautions, OSHA, CDC)	
5. Products to be used for cleaning and disinfecting	
6. Labeling and storage of cleaned and disinfected tools and equipment	
7. Single- and multi-use items and materials	
B. Workplace Safety Precautions	
1. Procedures for maintaining safe working conditions	
2. Safe water temperature	
3. Safe use of equipment and maintenance procedures	
4. Labeling and storage of materials and chemicals	
5. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and prohibited materials and substances	
6. Federal safety regulations (e.g., OSHA, EPA, FDA)	
7. Identifying adverse reactions to chemicals	
8. Protective chemical barriers and draping for clients	
9. Proper ventilation	
10. Electrical safety	

<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>2. Client Consultation and Skin Analysis</b>	<b>19%</b>
A. Client Consultation	
1. Client intake and consent form procedures to determine possible contraindications	
2. Declining or altering service based on contraindications	
3. Recommendation client seek a medical opinion	
B. Skin	
1. Skin structure	
2. Skin analysis	
3. Selection of appropriate services based on condition of skin	
C. Adverse Reactions, Diseases, Contraindications	
1. Allergic reaction (patch) test procedures	
2. Skin diseases and disorders	
3. Signs of adverse reactions to products during and after service	
<b>3. Skin Care</b>	<b>17%</b>
A. Massage	
1. Safe facial massage movements	
B. Preparation, Products, and Services	
1. Preparing client for skin care services	
2. Use of different skin care products	
C. Skin Care Safety	
1. Safe procedures for performing facial services	
2. Safe procedures for chemical and mechanical exfoliation	
3. Safe use of skin care tools, machines, and devices	
4. Safe application and removal of hot towels	
5. Safe product use and application for all skin conditions	

<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>4. Makeup</b>	<b>3%</b>
A. Makeup Safety and Hygiene	
1. Safe makeup application and removal procedures (e.g., bracing techniques)	
2. Hygienic makeup application and removal procedures (e.g., disposable applicators, artist palette)	
<b>5. Eyelash and Eyebrow</b>	<b>6%</b>
A. Eyelash and Eyebrow Safety	
1. Safe application and removal of eyelash enhancements	
2. Safe application procedures for chemical eyelash services	
B. Products and Procedures	
1. Safe use of eyebrow and eyelash tinting products	
2. Safety procedures for artificial eyelash adhesive and remover products	
<b>6. Hair Removal</b>	<b>15%</b>
A. Hair Removal Safety	
1. Safe hair removal using waxing and sugaring	
2. Safe hair removal using tweezing and threading	
3. Tools, supplies, and products for hair removal	
B. Infection Control (e.g., cross-contamination, wearing gloves)	
C. Contraindications to Hair Removal Services	

<b>Nail Technician Theory Examination General Portion</b>	
65 Questions (60 scored, 5 non-scored)	
1.5 hours (90 minutes)	
<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>1. Safety and Infection Control</b>	<b>50%</b>
A. Workplace Infection Control Procedures	
1. Infectious diseases, pathogens, and exposure prevention	
2. Methods and procedures for cleaning and disinfection	
a. Contaminated tools	
b. Machines and equipment	
c. Daily workstation	
3. Levels of decontamination (i.e., cleaning, disinfection, sterilization)	
4. Procedures for exposure incidents (e.g., Standard/Universal Precautions, OSHA, CDC)	
5. Products to be used for cleaning and disinfecting	
6. Labeling and storage of cleaned and disinfected tools and equipment	
7. Single- and multi-use items and materials	
B. Workplace Safety Precautions	
1. Procedures for maintaining safe working conditions	
2. Safe water temperature	
3. Safe use of equipment and maintenance procedures	
4. Labeling and storage of materials and chemicals	
5. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and prohibited materials and substances	
6. Federal safety regulations (e.g., OSHA, EPA, FDA)	
7. Identifying adverse reactions to chemicals	
8. Protective chemical barriers and draping for clients	
9. Proper ventilation	
10. Electrical safety	

<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>2. Client Consultation and Nail Analysis</b>	<b>18%</b>
A. Client Consultation	
1. Client intake and consent form procedures to determine possible contraindications	
2. Declining or altering service based on contraindications	
3. Recommendation client seek a medical opinion	
B. Skin and Nail	
1. Skin and nail structure	
2. Skin and nail analysis	
3. Selection of appropriate services based on condition of skin and nails	
C. Adverse Reactions, Diseases, Contraindications	
1. Allergic reaction (patch) test procedures	
2. Skin diseases and disorders	
3. Nail diseases and disorders	
4. Signs of adverse reactions to products during and after service	
5. Contraindications to manicure and pedicure services	
6. Contraindications to nail enhancement services	
<b>3. Skin Care</b>	<b>10%</b>
A. Massage	
1. Safe manicure and pedicure massage movements	
B. Skin Care Safety	
1. Safe use of skin care tools, machines, and devices	
2. Safe application and removal of hot towels	
3. Safe product use and application for all skin conditions	
4. Safe removal of calluses	

Topic Name	Weight
<b>4. Nail Care</b>	<b>22%</b>
A. Nail Safety	
1. Safe use of nail products, tools, and equipment	
2. Safe filing and buffing of nails	
3. Safe cuticle removal	
4. Safe manicure and pedicure procedures	
B. Nail Workstation and Environment	
1. Nail station ventilation (e.g., particulate matter control)	
2. Nail infection control procedures (e.g., closing multi-use containers while clipping and filing, clean files and buffers)	
C. Nail Enhancement	
1. Natural nail products, procedures, and repair	
2. Artificial nail enhancement products, application, maintenance, and repair	
3. Artificial nail removal	

<b>Electrologist Theory Examination General Portion</b>	
55 Questions (50 scored, 5 non-scored)	
1.5 hours (90 minutes)	
<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>1. Safety and Infection Control</b>	<b>36%</b>
A. Workplace Infection Control Procedures	
1. Infectious diseases, pathogens, and exposure prevention	
2. Methods and procedures for cleaning and disinfection	
a. Contaminated tools	
b. Machines and equipment	
c. Daily workstation	
3. Levels of decontamination (i.e., cleaning, disinfection, sterilization)	
4. Procedures for exposure incidents (e.g., Standard/Universal Precautions, OSHA, CDC)	
5. Products to be used for cleaning and disinfecting	
6. Labeling and storage of cleaned and disinfected tools and equipment	
7. Single- and multi-use items and materials	
B. Workplace Safety Precautions	
1. Procedures for maintaining safe working conditions	
2. Safe use of equipment and maintenance procedures	
3. Labeling and storage of materials and chemicals	
4. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and prohibited materials and substances	
5. Federal safety regulations (e.g., OSHA, EPA, FDA)	
6. Identifying adverse reactions to chemicals	
7. Protective barriers and draping for clients	
8. Proper ventilation	
9. Electrical safety	

<b>Topic Name</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>2. Client Consultation and Hair and Skin Analysis</b>	<b>30%</b>
A. Client Consultation	
1. Client intake and consent form procedures to determine possible contraindications	
2. Declining or altering service based on contraindications	
3. Recommendation client seek a medical opinion	
B. Hair and Skin	
1. Hair and skin structure	
2. Hair and skin analysis	
3. Selection of appropriate services based on condition of hair and skin	
C. Adverse Reactions, Diseases, Contraindications	
1. Allergic reaction (patch) test procedures	
2. Hair diseases and disorders	
3. Skin diseases and disorders	
4. Signs of adverse reactions to products during and after service	
<b>3. Electrolysis Treatment and Analysis</b>	<b>34%</b>
A. Pre-treatment Analysis	
1. Basic principles of electrology	
2. Probe selection	
3. Sharps container	
B. Treatment Procedures	
1. Skin preparation pre-treatment	
2. Post-treatment products and procedures	
C. Adverse Reactions to Treatment	
D. Hair Removal Methods	
1. Galvanic	
2. High Frequency	
3. Blend	