

Executive summary

This executive summary describes the methodology and procedures employed to conduct a role delineation study and to develop the exam specifications for the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC®) Advanced Certified Oncology Nurse (ACON™) certification examination.

In 2024, ONCC completed a project to develop competency models for oncology nursing at the advanced and generalist levels. The project included several meetings with subject matter experts (SMEs) and a survey to validate the work of the panel of SMEs. The result of the study was a list of 132 competencies across 7 domains for the advanced oncology nurse.

PSI Services LLC (PSI) conducted a role delineation meeting on March 21-22, 2025, with a panel of SMEs to review the advanced competencies and survey results from the competency modeling project. The purpose of the role delineation study was to finalize the task and knowledge statements that would comprise the next Examination Content Outline and finalize the content weighting for the examination.

The panel first reviewed the practitioner definition and recommended that “leadership” be included in the description. The updated practitioner definition is:

The Advanced Certified Oncology Nurse (ACON) certification is for registered nurses in oncology with advanced degrees (master's or higher) - whether in clinical practice, nursing administration, leadership, education, research, or consultation.

Then the panel examined the demographic results and confirmed that these results aligned with their expectations and impressions of the practitioner population, suggesting that the respondent sample is reflective of the target population.

Next, the panel reviewed the full list of 132 competencies, paying special attention to those with the lowest mean importance or frequency ratings from the survey. The panel revised several competencies to reflect tasks performed by the role or to clarify knowledge required in the role. The panel also removed statements that were redundant, untestable, or less relevant compared to other statements. The panel recommended a content outline with 104 statements across 7 domains.

Finally, the panel reviewed the draft content weighting, discussing any necessary adjustments to ensure adequate content coverage in the assessment. The draft content weighting was developed by calculating the criticality value (the product of the mean importance rating and the mean frequency rating) and then determining a percentage weight based on the relative proportion of the criticality value for each content area. The panel made slight adjustments to the weight domains 2, 5, 6, and 7 by rounding down so the more emphasis could be put on domains 3 and 4.

See below for a summary of the content weighting determination.

Content weighting determination.

DOMAIN	DRAFT %	DRAFT #	FINAL %	FINAL #
I. SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION	10.2%	12.8	10%	13
II. CANCER AS A DISEASE	16.9%	21.2	16%	20
III. ASSESSMENT AND DECISION-MAKING	19.3%	24.2	20%	25
IV. TREATMENT MODALITIES	17.6%	22.0	20%	25
V. CARE MANAGEMENT	15.5%	19.4	15%	19
VI. PATIENT AND CAREGIVER SUPPORT	10.7%	13.3	10%	13
VII. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE	9.5%	11.8	9%	10

Following the final role delineation meeting, a group of advanced pediatric oncology nurses reviewed the content outline. The purpose of this meeting was to determine relevancy for advanced pediatric oncology nurses. The panel made several comments about the content outline for ONCC to consider. Following the review, 4 statements were edited slightly, and 4 task statements were added to the content outline.

The final content outline includes 108 statements across 7 domains.

The updated practitioner description is as follows:

The Advanced Certified Oncology Nurse (ACON™) certification is for adult or pediatric registered nurses in oncology with advanced degrees (master's or higher) – whether in clinical practice, nursing administration, education, research, or consultation