



**AONL**

American Organization  
for Nursing Leadership™

**CREDENTIALING CENTER**



# Examination and Program Handbook

Revised 2023

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## ABOUT THE AONL-CC

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The American Organization for Nursing Leadership Credentialing Center (AONL-CC) is an activity of the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL). The AONL-CC Steering Committee governs both the Certified in Executive Nursing Practice (CNML) and Certified Nurse Manager and Leader (CNML) certification programs.

The CNML credentialing program in development or in operation with the AONL-CC has a CNML Sub Committee that serves as content expert, program resource, and consultant to the AONL-CC Steering Committee regarding program development, examination content, test development, test administration and evaluation. Members are appointed by the AONL-CC Steering Committee.

Members of the Steering Committee and the CNML Sub Committee for the CNML program are listed on the AONL website. [www.AONL.org](http://www.AONL.org)

### CONSULTING AGENCIES

The AONL-CC contracts with the American Hospital Association Certification Center (AHA-CC) for project management and quality assurance services in support of the CNML Program. In turn, the AHA-CC engages PSI to assist with the development, administration, scoring, score reporting and analysis of the CNML Examination.

## ADHERING TO PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

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The AONL-CC is responsible to its candidates, certificants, employers, the profession and the public for ensuring the integrity of all processes and products of its Certification Programs. As such, the AONL-CC adheres to the American Hospital Association Certification Center (AHA-CC) requirements for Professional Standards of Conduct by all who have achieved certification through successful completion of its programs.

## AHERING TO PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

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### PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

A certificant who is awarded certification by the AONL-CC agrees to conduct himself / herself in an ethical and professional manner. This includes demonstrating practice-related behavior that is indicative of professional integrity. By accepting certification, the certificant agrees to:

- Maintain professional competence;
- Demonstrate work behavior that exemplifies ability to perform safely, competently and with good judgment;
- Conduct professional activities with honesty and integrity;
- Avoid discriminating against any individual based on age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, disability or marital status or any other protected characteristic;
- Avoid conflicts of interest;
- Abide by the laws, rules and regulations of duly authorized agencies regulating the profession; and

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- Abide by rules and regulations governing programs conducted by the AONL Credentialing Center.

Infraction of these Professional Standards of Conduct is misconduct for which granting of a certification or renewal of a certification may be delayed or denied, or for which a certification may be revoked by the AONL-CC.

## REPORTING VIOLATIONS

To protect the national credentials and to ensure responsible practice by its certificants, the AONL-CC depends upon its candidates and certificants, professionals, employers, regulatory agencies and the public to report incidents that may be in violation of these Professional Standards of Conduct. A certificant who has violated these Standards should voluntarily surrender their certification.

Complaints may be submitted by any individual or entity.

Complaints should be reported in writing and should include the name of the person submitting the complaint, the name of the person the complaint is regarding along with other relevant identifying information, a detailed description of factual allegations supporting the charges, and any relevant supporting documentation. Written complaints regarding violations of certification policies and/or the Professional Standards of Conduct should be mailed to:

American Organization for Nursing Leadership  
155 North Wacker Dr.  
Suite 400  
Chicago, IL 60606

OR  
[aonl@aha.org](mailto:aonl@aha.org)  
Subject Line: AONL-CC

Only signed, communication will be considered.

The AONL-CC will become involved only in matters that can be factually determined, and commits to handling any situation as fairly and expeditiously as possible. During its investigation and decision, the AONL-CC will protect the confidentiality of those who provide information to every possible extent. The named individual will be afforded every opportunity to respond in a professional and legally defensible manner, in accordance with policies established by the AONL-CC.

The CNML Sub Committee will review, investigate and make recommendations to the Steering Committee for final determination regarding CNML certificants. In the event a certificant violates the Professional Standards of Conduct and/or the CNML Steering Committee certification rules, requirements, and/or policies the Steering Committee may reprimand or suspend the individual or may revoke certification.

A complete copy of the Disciplinary & Complaints policy and procedures is available from the AONL-CC upon request.

A candidate's signature on an application for examination attests to adherence to Professional Standards of Conduct.

## STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The AONL-CC does not discriminate among candidates on the basis of age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual identity or any other protected characteristic.

## TARGET PRACTITIONER DEFINITION

The nurse manager and leader is a nurse leader who has the skills to facilitate delivery of high quality evidence-based

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collaborative care to a wide range of patients. Nurse Managers/Leaders possess clinical expertise in nursing. The Nurse Manager/Leader have full clinical and administrative responsibility and accountability for their unit(s). Administrative responsibility includes management of finances, human resources, staffing, performance improvement, technology, and strategy. The Nurse Manager/Leader uses broad-based clinical and leadership skills through communication, mentoring, advocacy, systems thinking, critical thinking, and establishment of a healthy work environment.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Each eligibility requirement has been established to ensure that individuals certified by AONL-CC have an acceptable level of knowledge and skill. In establishing these requirements the Steering Committee acknowledges that a combination of both work experience and demonstrated knowledge are essential for individuals earning the Certified Nurse Manager and Leader (CNML) credential. An individual who meets eligibility requirements and passes the CNML examination attains the Certified Nurse Manager and Leader (CNML) designation.

To be eligible for the Certified Nurse Manager and Leader (CNML) examination, a candidate must meet the target practitioner definition and fulfill one of the following requirements for education / work experience. To be eligible for the Certified Nurse Manager and Leader (CNML) examination, a candidate must meet the target practitioner definition and fulfill one of the following requirements for education / work experience.

Licensure Requirement	
Hold a valid and unrestricted license as a Registered Nurse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The AONL-CC maintains an exclusive partner for evaluating international credentials and licenses of nurses educated and licensed outside the US. To validate international credentials (license and education), applicants must present verification from CGFNS International, Inc. (<a href="http://www.cgfns.org/services/credentials-evaluation/">http://www.cgfns.org/services/credentials-evaluation/</a>). Verification documents from any other organization will not be accepted.</li> </ul>	
Education Requirement	
Hold a baccalaureate in nursing degree or higher (degree must be from an accredited institution)	
Work Experience Requirement (must satisfy Option 1 or Option 2)	
Option 1	Option 2
Have at least 2,080 hours of experience in a nurse manager/primary unit leader role	Have at least 4,160 hours of experience in a comprehensive nursing leadership support role
<i>Work experience must be consistent with the CNML definition (see AONL-CC Purpose and Scope).</i>	

## CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES

The AONL-CC complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and strives to ensure that no individual with a disability is deprived of the opportunity to take the examination solely by reason of that disability. Through its agents, the AONL-CC will provide reasonable accommodation for a candidate with a disability who requests accommodation.

Wheelchair access is available at all Assessment Centers.

## EXAMINATION CONTENT AND TIMING

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### HOW THE EXAMINATION IS DEVELOPED

The Steering Committee participates in and provides oversight for the development and ongoing maintenance of the examinations via the CNML Sub Committee. The Steering Committee, CNML Sub Committee, and certification director work in partnership PSI to ensure the examinations are developed and maintained in a manner consistent with generally accepted psychometric principles, educational testing practices, and national accreditation standards for certification programs.

The Steering Committee and certification director select diverse groups of qualified subject matter experts (SMEs) to participate in exam development activities throughout the examination development process. SMEs are selected based on their demonstrated expertise, experience level, geographic representation, and specialty area and serve on the Examination Development Committees for the CNML credential. SMEs participate in writing and reviewing examination questions, reviewing examinations, and recommend the passing point for the examinations.

Job Analysis /Role Delineation Studies are conducted periodically to identify and validate the knowledge and skills which are measured by the examinations. Each job analysis study includes a survey developed by SMEs and testing consultants and distributed to a broad group of professionals. The results of the Job Analysis /Role Delineation Studies serve as the basis for the examination and are used to develop the content outline included in this handbook.

The methodology used to set the minimum passing score is the Angoff method, in which expert judges estimate the passing probability of each question on the examination. These ratings are averaged to determine the preliminary minimum passing score (i.e., the number of correctly answered questions required to pass the examination). This method takes into account the difficulty of the examination. The preliminary minimum passing score is validated by the performance of candidates. The passing standard is applied consistently across all candidates who take the same form of the examination.

***All examination questions are the copyrighted property of the AONL-CC. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Doing so may result in severe civil and criminal penalties.***

### EXAMINATION FORMAT AND TIMING

The examination is composed of 115 multiple-choice questions. A candidate's score is based on 100 of these questions; 15 are "trial" or "pretest" questions that are interspersed throughout the examination. A candidate is allowed two (2.0) hours in which to complete the examination.

The examination is based on five major content areas. Each content area is described by the list of tasks that follows the content heading in the CNML Examination Content Outline. In addition, the number of examination questions devoted to each major content area is indicated.

## PREPARING FOR THE EXAMINATION

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### CONTENT

Study should begin by reviewing the Examination Content Outline (see page 18). Review the content categories

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and related tasks, identifying those tasks that are not performed regularly and are not familiar. Then, focus study on those unfamiliar tasks. Remember that all questions in the CNML Examination are job-related and test application and analysis of information, not just recall of isolated facts.

## **OTHER STUDY RESOURCES**

The AONL-CC recommend that review for the CNML Examination focus on references and programs that cover the information summarized in the CNML Examination Content Outline. It should not be inferred that questions in the examination are selected from any single reference or set of references or that study from specific references guarantees a passing score on the examination. For information about references, study guides and study sessions that address content contained in the CNML Examination Content Outline visit [www.AONL.org](http://www.AONL.org).

## **THE APPLICATION AND SCHEDULING PROCESS**

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### **FEE SCHEDULE**

Refer to the [AONL-CC](http://www.AONL-CC) website for current fee schedule

### **APPLICATION**

AONL-CC is responsible to its candidates, certificants, employers, the profession, and the public for ensuring the integrity of all processes and products of its Certification Programs. As such, the AONL-CC requires examination applicants attest that information provided in the application, including eligibility requirements, are factual. If audited, applicants must provide proof of eligibility to the AONL-CC of academic degree earned, job description and employment history related to the specific role. If the application information is found to be incomplete or inaccurate, your application may be rejected or processing of it delayed or voided and if already achieved, the certification may be revoked.

### **Online Application and Scheduling**

Complete the application and scheduling process in one online session by visiting [AONL-CC](http://www.AONL-CC). Click on "Taking the CNML Exam", log in or create an account and follow the online instructions.

Changes in business contact information, organization firewalls, and internal delays in delivery of mail may impact the receipt of important information regarding your certification. It is highly recommended you use permanent mailing and email addresses as preferred sources of contact. This information is retained in the membership database and will be used for all records and communications.

The AONL Membership Services Department at 312.422.2800 can assist regarding your contact information and membership status.

After the application information, attestation of terms and conditions and payment using a credit card (VISA, MasterCard, American Express, Discover) have been submitted, the candidate will receive an Authorization to Test (ATT) email confirming eligibility and prompting you to schedule a CNML examination appointment or to supply additional eligibility information. The candidate must schedule a CNML examination date that is within 90 days of the CNML Examination application.

### **REQUEST FOR SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

A candidate with a visual, sensory or physical disability that prevents taking the examination under standard conditions may request special accommodations and arrangements. If special accommodations are requested, please complete the "ADA Accommodation" portion of the application before submitting.

Approximately ten (10) business days after the receipt of application, a notice is sent by email to the candidate

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stating the application has been received and approved. Generally, candidates receive their admission letter to the testing about two (2) to three (3) weeks prior to the CNML special administration date. The notice includes the date, location and check-in time for the CNML Examination. A candidate is allowed to take only the CNML Examination for which application is made and confirmation from AHA is received. Unscheduled candidates (walk-ins) are not allowed to take the CNML Examination.

### Application Assistance

The American Hospital Association Certification Center (AHA-CC) provides contracted services to AONL-CC in support of the CNML program. For assistance in the application process contact AHA-CC at 312-422-3702.

## APPLICATION PROCESSING AND CNML EXAMINATION SCHEDULING

Once eligibility is confirmed, candidates will receive their Authorization to Test notice by email with instructions on scheduling a testing appointment online or by phone.

### EXAMINATION APPOINTMENT

When scheduling a CNML Examination at a PSI Test Center, be prepared to provide your assigned identification number and confirm a location and a preferred date and time for testing. For a computer administration at a PSI Test Center, a candidate's application is valid for 90 days from the date of eligibility. **The candidate must schedule an appointment and take the CNML Examination within this 90-day period.** A candidate who fails to schedule an appointment within the 90-day period forfeits the application and all fees paid to take the CNML Examination. A complete application and full examination fee are required to reapply for CNML Examination.

A candidate is allowed to take only the examination for which application is made and confirmation is received. Unscheduled candidates (walk-ins) are not tested.

### RESCHEDULING OR CANCELING AN EXAMINATION

Although exam fees are nonrefundable. A candidate who is unable to test as scheduled may reschedule the CNML examination.

A candidate who wants to reschedule or cancel a CNML Examination after the 90-day period forfeits the application and all fees paid to take the CNML Examination. A new, complete application and full CNML Examination fee are required to reapply for the CNML Examination.

- A candidate may reschedule the examination once at no charge by calling PSI at 888.519.9901 at least 2 business days prior to a scheduled administration. For a computer administration at a PSI Test Center, the following schedule applies.

If the examination is scheduled on	PSI must be called by 3:00 PM Central Time to reschedule the examination by the previous
Monday	Wednesday
Tuesday	Thursday
Wednesday	Friday
Thursday	Monday

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Friday	Tuesday
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- A candidate who wishes to reschedule a second time may reschedule by calling PSI at 888.519.9901 and paying the \$100 rescheduling fee. A new application is not required. The examination must be rescheduled within 90 days of the date of the originally scheduled testing session.
- A candidate who does not reschedule an examination within the 90-day period forfeits the application and all fees paid to take the examination. A new, complete application and examination fee are required to reapply for examination.

## INTERNATIONAL TESTING

Candidates who are eligible for the CNML Examination and wish to be tested outside of the U.S. may be accommodated for an additional fee. See [www.AONL.org](http://www.AONL.org) for a Request for International Examination Administration form. Click on *Certification* and then on *Request for International Examination Administration*.

## THE EXAMINATION PROCES

The CNML examination is administered on computer at PSI Test Centers.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER OR EMERGENCY

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen emergencies on the day of examination, the AONL-CC, in concert with PSI/AMP, will determine whether circumstances warrant the cancellation, and subsequent rescheduling, of an examination. The examination usually proceeds as scheduled if testing personnel are able to conduct business.

Every attempt is made to administer an examination as scheduled; however, should an examination be canceled, the scheduled candidate will receive notification following the examination regarding a rescheduled examination date or reapplication procedures. In the case of cancellation, no additional fee is required to test.

For computer administrations at PSI/AMP Assessment Centers, candidates may visit PSI/AMP's website at [www.goPSI/AMP.com](http://www.goPSI/AMP.com) prior to the examination to determine if any Assessment Centers have been closed.

In the event of a personal emergency on the day of examination, a candidate may request consideration of rescheduling the examination without additional fee by contacting the AONLCC in writing within 30 days of the scheduled testing session. A description of the emergency and supporting documentation are required. Rescheduling without additional fee will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## SECURITY

The AONL-CC and PSI maintain examination administration and security standards that are designed to assure that all candidates are provided the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The testing environment is continuously monitored by audio and video surveillance equipment or examination personnel.

## REPORTING FOR THE EXAMINATION

Report to the assigned PSI Test Center 30 minutes before the scheduled testing time. After entering the Test Center follow the signs indicating PSI Test Center Check-In.

Bring with you the Authorization to Test notice provided. It contains the unique identification number required to take the test and is required for admission to the testing room.

For a special administration, report to the testing room at the time indicated on the confirmation notice. The examination will begin after all scheduled candidates are checked-in and seated or at the scheduled testing time whichever comes first. Follow the signs provided in the hotel/convention center to locate the testing room.

## **FAILING TO REPORT FOR THE CNML EXAMINATION**

Showing up late or not at all for an already rescheduled CNML Examination, without the requisite advance two (2) business day notice, results in the candidate forfeiting all fees. A complete CNML Examination application and full CNML Examination fee are required to reapply for the CNML Examination. A candidate who does not reschedule a CNML Examination session that is within the 90-day period forfeits the application and all fees paid. A complete application and full exam fee are required to reapply for the exam.

## **ON-SITE SECURITY**

AONL-CC and PSI maintain examination administration and security standards that are designed to assure that all candidates are provided the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The testing environment at PSI Test Centers is continuously monitored by audio and video surveillance equipment or exam personnel. Candidates may be subjected to a metal detection scan upon entering the examination room.

## **IDENTITY VERIFICATION**

To gain admission to the PSI Test Center or testing room the candidate must present two (2) forms of identification. The primary form must be government issued, current, and include the candidate's name, signature and photograph. The candidate will also be required to sign a roster for verification of identity. A candidate without proper identification will not be permitted to take the CNML Examination.

- Examples of valid primary forms of identification are current driver's license with photograph, current state identification card with photograph, current passport, or current military identification card with photograph.
- The secondary form of identification must display the candidate's name and signature for the candidate's signature verification. (e.g., credit card with signature, social security card with signature, employment/student ID card with signature, etc.)
- If the candidate's name on the registration list is different than it appears on the forms of identification, the candidate must bring proof of the name change (e.g., marriage license, divorce decree, or court order).
- No form of temporary identification will be accepted.

A candidate without proper identification is not permitted to test.

## **USE OF CALCULATORS**

Some exam questions may require calculations. The use of a silent, nonprogrammable calculator without paper tape printing capability or alpha keypad is permitted during testing. Use of a computer, tablet, or a cell phone is not permitted. Calculators will be checked for conformance with this regulation before candidates are allowed admission to the Test Center or testing room. Calculators that do not comply with these specifications are not permitted in the PSI Test Center or testing room.

## **RULES FOR THE EXAMINATION**

1. No personal items (including watches, hats and coats) valuables or weapons should be brought into the testing room. Only keys, wallets and items required for medical or personal needs are permitted. Books, papers, computers, dictionaries or other reference materials are strictly prohibited. If personal items are observed in the testing room after the examination is started, the exam administration will be forfeited. PSI is not responsible for items left in the reception room.
2. Pencils will be provided during check-in. No personal writing instruments are allowed in the testing room.
3. CNML Examinations are proprietary. CNML examination questions may not be recorded or shared with any individual in any manner. No cameras, notes, tape recorders, pagers or cellular/smart phones or other recording devices

are allowed in the testing room. Possession of a cellular/smart phone or other electronic devices is strictly prohibited and will result in dismissal from the CNML Examination.

4. Eating, drinking or smoking is not permitted in the testing room.
5. No documents or notes of any kind may be taken from the testing room. Each candidate will be provided one sheet of scratch paper that must be returned to the supervisor at the completion of testing.
6. No questions concerning the content of the CNML examination may be asked of anyone during the examination.
7. Permission from the examination proctor is required to leave the testing room during the examination. No additional time is granted to compensate for time lost.
8. No guests, visitors or family members are allowed in the testing room or reception areas.

Candidates observed engaging in any of the following conduct during the CNML Examination may be dismissed from the CNML Examination session, their score on the CNML Examination voided and the CNML Examination fees forfeited.

- Gaining unauthorized admission to the CNML Examination
- Creating a disturbance, being abusive or otherwise uncooperative
- Displaying and/or using electronic communications equipment including but not limited to pagers, cellular/smart phones, etc.
- Talking or participating in conversation with other CNML Examination candidates
- Giving or receiving help or being suspected of doing so
- Leaving the PSI Test Center or testing room during the CNML Examination
- Attempting to record CNML Examination questions in any manner or making note
- Attempting to take the CNML Examination for someone else
- Having possession of personal belongings
- Using notes, books, or other aids without it being noted on the roster
- Attempting to remove CNML Examination materials or notes from the PSI Test Center or the testing room

Violation of any of the above provisions results in dismissal from the examination session. The candidate's score on the examination is voided and examination fees are not refunded.

Evidence of misconduct is reviewed by the Steering Committee of the AONL-CC to determine whether the candidate will be allowed to reapply for examination. If re-examination is granted, a complete application and examination fee are required to reapply.

## **COPYRIGHTED CNML EXAMINATION QUESTIONS**

All CNML Examination questions are the copyrighted property of the AONL-CC. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute or display these CNML Examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Doing so may result in severe civil and criminal penalties.

## **TAKING THE EXAMINATION**

After identity of the CNML candidate has been verified and his/her calculator has been approved, the candidate is directed to a testing carrel for a computer administration or an assigned seat for a special administration. Candidates are provided one sheet of scratch paper for calculations that must be returned to the examination proctor at the completion of testing. Failure to do so will result in the test score report not being released administration process.

For a **computer administration at a PSI Test Center or a laptop administration**, the CNML candidate is provided instructions on-screen. First, the candidate is instructed to enter his/her unique identification number. Then, the candidate's photograph is taken and remains on-screen throughout the CNML Examination session. Prior to attempting the CNML Examination, the candidate is provided a short tutorial on using the software to take the exam. Tutorial time is NOT counted as part of the 3.5 hours allowed for the exam. Only after a candidate is

comfortable with the software and chooses to start the Examination does the exam time begin.

The **computer monitors the time spent on the examination**. The CNML Examination terminates at the 3.5 hours mark. Clicking on the “Time” button in the lower right portion of the screen reveals a digital clock that indicates the time remaining. The time feature may also be turned off during the CNML Examination.

**Only one CNML Examination question is presented at a time**. The question number appears in the lower right portion of the screen. The entire CNML Examination question appears on-screen (question and four options labeled A, B, C and D). Select an answer either by entering the letter of the option (A, B, C or D) or using the mouse to click on the selected option. The letter of the selected option appears in the window in the lower left portion of the screen. To change an answer, enter a different option by pressing the A, B, C or D key or by clicking on the option using the mouse. An answer may be changed multiple times.

**To move to the next question**, click on the forward arrow (>) in the lower right corner of the screen. This action allows the candidate to move forward through the CNML Examination question by question. To review a question, click the backward arrow (<) to advance to the next unanswered or bookmarked question on the CNML Examination.

**A CNML Examination question may be left unanswered for return later in the testing session**. Questions may also be bookmarked for later review by clicking in the blank square to the right of the TIME button. Click on the double arrows (>>) to advance to the next unanswered or bookmarked question on the CNML Examination. To identify all unanswered or bookmarked questions, repeatedly click on the double arrows (>>). When the CNML Examination is completed, the number of CNML Examination questions answered is reported. If fewer than 175 questions were answered and time remains, return to the CNML Examination and answer the remaining questions. Be sure to answer each exam question before ending the exam. There is no penalty for guessing.

**Candidates may provide comments about a test item**. Comments will be reviewed, but individual responses will not be provided.

- For a computer administration, online comments may be provided for any CNML Examination question by clicking on the Comment button to the left of the TIME button. This opens a dialogue box where comments may be entered.

## CNML EXAMINATION SCORE REPORTS

Score reports are issued by PSI on behalf of the AHA-CC. Scores are reported in written form only, in person or by U.S. mail. Scores are not reported over the telephone, by electronic mail or by facsimile.

- A candidate who takes the examination in paper-and-pencil format receives his/her score report from PSI by mail generally in about three (3) to five (5) weeks after the CNML examination.
- A candidate who takes the examination on a computer at a PSI Test Center or on laptop receives his/her score report on-screen and via email.

The score report indicates a “Pass” or “Fail,” which is determined by the raw score on the total CNML Examination. The score report also includes raw scores for each of the major categories of the CNML Examination Content Outline. A raw score is the number of questions answered correctly. Responses to individual CNML Examination questions will not be disclosed to a candidate. Although the CNML Examination consists of 175 questions, the score is based on 150 questions. 25 questions are “pretest” questions and do not impact the candidate’s score.

Recognition of CNML certification and information about CNML certification renewal are issued from the AONL-CC generally in about four (4) to six (6) weeks of successfully completing the CNML Examination. This package is mailed to the address contained in the database.

## HOW THE CNML EXAMINATION PASSING SCORE IS SET

The methodology used to set the initial minimum passing score is the Angoff method in which expert judges estimate the passing probability of each question on the CNML Examination. These ratings are averaged to determine the preliminary minimum passing score (i.e., the number of correctly answered questions required to pass the examination). This method takes into account the difficulty of the CNML Examination. The preliminary minimum passing score is validated by the performance of candidates. The passing standard is applied consistently across all CNML candidates who take the same form of the CNML Examination. When new forms of the CNML Examination are introduced, a certain number of CNML Examination questions in the various content areas are replaced by new CNML Examination questions. These changes may cause one form of the CNML Examination to be slightly easier or harder than another form. To adjust for these differences in difficulty, a procedure called “equating” is used. For equated CNML Examinations that have different passing scores, the equating process helps ensure that the levels of CNML examinee knowledge are equivalent on the various CNML Examination forms.

## PASSING THE EXAMINATION

An eligible candidate who passes the CNML Examination is awarded the CNML credential. Generally about four (4) to six (6) weeks after the candidate passes the CNML Examination, the AHA-CC mails to the candidate a certificate of recognition, a pin and information about CNML certification renewal requirements. The name on the certificate and the address to which the package is mailed is based on information the candidate’s membership record. It is the candidate’s responsibility to keep current this information. The AONL-CC, reserves the right to recognize publicly any candidate who has successfully completed the CNML Examination. Recognition is awarded so as not to embarrass any candidate who is not successful in achieving certification. Name, address, telephone number and email address of a candidate who passes the CNML Examination will be shared with the AONL. Scores are never reported. If you do NOT wish to have your personal information shared, please opt out by contacting the AONL-CC in writing via email at [aonl@aha.org](mailto:aonl@aha.org)

## FAILING THE EXAMINATION

Candidates who receive an unsuccessful result on a CNML® certification exam have the opportunity to retake the examination at a future date. Candidates can retake the exam no sooner than 90 days after their most recent exam date and a maximum of four times in a 2-year period a new application will be available after the 90 days have passed.

## CNML EXAMINATION SCORES CANCELED BY AONL-CC

The AONL-CC and PSI are responsible for the integrity of the scores reported. On occasion, occurrences, such as computer malfunction or misconduct by a candidate, may cause a score to be suspect. The AONL-CC is committed to rectifying such discrepancies as expeditiously as possible. The AONL-CC may void examination results if, upon investigation, violation of AONL- CC regulations is discovered.

## DUPLICATE SCORE REPORT

Duplicate score reports can be obtained via request to [info@psionline.com](mailto:info@psionline.com).

## CNML EXAMINATION SCORE CONFIDENTIALITY

Information about an individual’s application status, personal applicant/certificant information, and examination results are considered confidential. However, AONL-CC reserves the right to use information supplied by or on behalf of a candidate in the conduct of research. Studies and reports concerning candidates contain no information identifiable with any candidate unless authorized by the candidate.

Demographic information about a candidate is shared only when beneficial to the candidate. Scores are never reported to anyone other than the candidate, unless the candidate directs such a request in writing.

All application information is confidential and will not be shared with any party other than PSI for exam administration and certification processing purposes. Information about a candidate/certificant will only be released to that applicant/certificant unless release of the information is authorized in writing by the individual or is required by law.

## INFORMATION FOR THE NEW CERTIFICANT

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### CERTIFICATION VERIFICATION

An individual's certification status is not considered confidential. The names of certified individuals are not considered confidential and may be published by the AONL-CC. The AONL-CC provides confirmation of certification status via [CNML verification portal](#) on the AONL website. Verification of certification status includes the individuals name, city, state and certification period.

### RESEARCH & AGGREGATE DATA

The AONL-CC reserves the right to use information supplied by or on behalf of a candidate. Studies and reports concerning candidates contain no information identifiable with any candidate, unless authorized by the candidate. Demographic information about a candidate is shared only in cases where the candidate may benefit. Scores are never reported to anyone other than the candidate, unless the candidate directs such a request in writing.

Aggregate exam statistics (including the number of exam candidates, pass/fail rates, and total number of certificants) will be publicly available.

### NAME AND ADDRESS CHANGE

If you move or change your name after obtaining certification, please notify the AONL Credentialing Center (AONL-CC), 155 North Wacker Dr. Suite 400, Chicago, IL 60606, Phone: 312.422.2800, Email: [aonl@aha.org](mailto:aonl@aha.org). Please provide a valid email address. Communication from the AONL-CC is primarily by email.

### USE OF THE CERTIFICATION MARK

After receiving notification of CNML designation, the credential may be used as long as certification remains valid and in good standing. Individuals may not use the CNML® credential until they have received specific written notification that they have successfully completed all requirements, including passing the exam. Certificants must comply with all recertification requirements to maintain use of the credential.

Certification is a non-transferable, revocable, limited, non-exclusive license to use the certification designation "CNML®," subject to compliance with the policies and procedures, as may be revised from time to time.

After meeting all eligibility requirements and passing the examination, individuals may use their credential in all correspondence and professional relations. The credential is typically used after the certificant's name following any academic degrees and licensure (e.g. Jane Smith, DNP, RN, CNML).

The certification mark(s) may be used only as long as certification is valid.

## CNML RECERTIFICATION PROCESS

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Attaining certification is an indication of mastery of a well-defined body of knowledge at a point in time. Periodic recertification is required to maintain certified status. Initial certification or recertification is valid for three (3) years.

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## PURPOSE & RATIONALE

AONL-CC supports the ongoing professional development of its certificants.

- The mandatory recertification process provides certificants with the opportunity to demonstrate the retention, reinforcement and expansion of their knowledge and skills.
- Recertification also provides encouragement to, and acknowledgement for, participation in ongoing professional development activities and continued learning.

To support this purpose, the recertification requirements require continuing professional education and activities that enhance ongoing professional development, recognize learning opportunities, and provide a process for both attaining and recording professional development achievements.

AONL-CC requires periodic recertification to promote professional development for certified nurse leaders and to ensure that individuals who hold the credentials maintain an ongoing commitment to learning in their area(s) of practice to strengthen their knowledge and skills.

Professional development is accomplished by either obtaining the required number of professional education hours or by passing the certification examination for which the content is periodically updated. Recertification by professional education hours ensures that the individual has participated in professional development activities that are directly related to the body of knowledge for Certified in Executive Nursing Practice (CNML) as defined by the exam content outline. Since the examination is updated periodically, recertification by examination also ensures that the certificant has continued to build his/her knowledge and skills during the time since initial certification.

The 3-year time period established for recertification is based on both the scope of issues that face certified nurse leaders and the AONL-CC's belief that new practices, research, and information are introduced in the field with enough frequency that professional development activities should be conducted routinely so that certificants remain up to date with both current best practices and emerging knowledge.

Eligible candidates who successfully complete the CNML Examination are provided information about recertification requirements in a certification package sent by the AONL-CC. The CNML Recertification Application must be submitted to the AHA-CC no more than (1) year prior to the expiration date. For an additional nonrefundable fee of \$50, certification renewals may be submitted up to 30 days past the expiration date. As a courtesy, the AONL-CC/AHA-CC emails notices to certificants of their pending certification expiration. Certificants are responsible for keeping their contact information accurate. The AHA-CC is not responsible for communications not received due to incorrect contact information in a certificant's record.

## EXPIRATION DATE

***Certification expires on the last day of the month in which the credential expires.*** Recertification applications will not be accepted from individual's whose certification is in a state of suspension or has been revoked.

Eligible candidates who successfully complete the CNML Examination are provided information about recertification renewal requirements in a certification package sent by the AONL-CC/AHA-CC. The **CNML Recertification Application must be submitted to the AHA-CC no more than (1) year prior to the expiration date. For an additional nonrefundable fee of \$50, certification renewals may be submitted up to 30 days past the expiration date.**

As a courtesy, the AHA-CC emails notices to certificants of their pending certification expiration. Certificants are responsible for keeping their contact information accurate. The AONL-CC and AHA-CC are not responsible for communications not received due to incorrect contact information in a certificant's record.

## RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

A certificant may recertify through one of the following routes:

- **Successful re-examination.** To renew this way, successfully pass the CNML Examination no more than one (1)

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year prior to expiration of your CNML Certification (subject to usual fees and provisions for testing). An additional Certification Renewal Application fee is not required if a candidate selects this way to renew the CNML designation.

- **Completion of 45 hours of eligible professional development activities over the 3-year period and payment of the Recertification fee.** To renew this way, submit a completed CNML Recertification Application with the appropriate fee and report all eligible continuing professional education activities that you completed during your certification period. Eligible activities include attending or teaching academic courses, completing online courses, attending professional organization conferences and completing AONLCC Self-Assessment Examinations, among other activities. Some activities have a limitation on maximum allowable hours. Refer to the current CNML Certification Recertification Application for a description of eligible activities and other provisions for renewing your certification.

Check the AONL website for current recertification fees

CNML Recertification Application processing is generally about two (2) weeks from receipt of application. Certificants who meet the renewal requirements receive in the mail (at the address in their membership record) a new certificate of recognition. Certificants are responsible for keeping current contact information in their membership record.

## **FAILING TO RENEW CNML CERTIFICATION**

A certificant who fails to renew their CNML certification will receive written notification that they are no longer considered certified and may not use the CNML credential in professional communications including but not limited to letterhead, stationery, business cards, directory listings and signatures. To regain certification, the individual must retake and pass the CNML Examination (subject to the usual fees and provisions for testing).

## **VERIFICATION & AUDIT PROCESS**

In order to maintain the credibility and integrity of the recertification process AONL-CC reserves the right to verify any information provided on recertification applications. Requests for verification may be made prior to recertification or at a future time. Certificants are advised to retain all renewal documentation for at least one year after their recertification deadline.

A percent of recertification applications will be audited to ensure that all requirements are met. When applications are selected for audit, certificants will be notified and asked to submit documentation of all professional education activities.

If any areas of non-compliance are identified during the any review of a recertification application the individual will have 30 days to submit any required information. If the required information is not provided the individual's certification will expire at the end of the 30 days or on the normal expiration date (whichever comes last). If an application is selected for audit and the certificant does not respond or does not submit the requested documentation, recertification is not granted.

## **APPEALS**

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### **ELIGIBILITY, EXAMINATION & RECERTIFICATION APPEALS**

A candidate who believes they were unjustly denied eligibility for the CNML examination, who challenges results of the CNML examination or who believes they were unjustly denied CNML recertification may request reconsideration of the decision by submitting a written appeal via email to [aonl@aha.org](mailto:aonl@aha.org).

The candidate for CNML certification or recertification must provide convincing evidence to the AONL-CC Steering

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Committee that a severe disadvantage was afforded the candidate during processing of an application for examination or prior to or during administration of an examination or recertification. The appeal must be made within 45 days of receipt of a score report or any other official correspondence related to certification or recertification from the AONL-CC, AHA-CC or its agents. The written appeal must also indicate the specific relief requested.

Complete copies of the appeals policies are available upon request from AONL-CC. Please email [aonl@aha.org](mailto:aonl@aha.org) to request the full policy.

## **DISCIPLINARY APPEALS**

Within thirty (30) days from receipt of notice of a determination by the Steering Committee that a certificant violated the certification program Professional Standards of Conduct and/or certification program policies and/or rules, the affected certificant may submit to the Steering Committee in writing a request for an appeal.

A complete copy of the Disciplinary & Complaints Policy, which includes the Appeals policies and procedures, is available upon request from AONL-CC. Please email [aonl@aha.org](mailto:aonl@aha.org) to request the full policy.

# CNML EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE

		Items
<b>1</b>	<b>Communication and Relationship Building</b>	<b>25</b>
A	Relationship Management	
1	Develops relationships across the care continuum to build alliances and partnerships and achieve common goals.	
2	Manages conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.	
3	Identifies the internal and external relationships that impact the work of the department/unit to achieve department/unit goals.	
4	Interprets organizational and strategic realities (e.g., labor costs, different models of care delivery, key performance indicators (KPI), supply chain disruption etc.) to navigate changes.	
5	Recognizes the impact on staff of <u>the</u> organization's decisions and takes appropriate action.	
B	Effective Communication	
6	Communicates with clarity and integrity to build trust with all stakeholders.	
7	Identifies and understands different communication styles.	
8	Utilizes appropriate communication style when engaging different audiences.	
9	Practices transparency and honesty to demonstrate authenticity.	
10	Builds trust by listening to and engaging staff and others.	
C	Influencing Behaviors	
11	Exchanges ideas to gain cooperation from others to accomplish goals.	
12	Uses information from multiple sources (e.g., evidence from research, data, reports) to gain consensus and commitment from stakeholders.	
13	Coaches staff in their development (e.g., conflict management, active listening, communication, etc.).	
14	Create policies and initiatives to influence desired departmental behaviors.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Health Care Environment &amp; Clinical Principles</b>	<b>18</b>
A	Nursing Practice and Application	
1	Assists with the development of care delivery models and environmental design to ensure the delivery of safe patient care that is evidence-based, accessible, affordable, and equitable.	
2	Recognizes the impact of internal and external factors on care delivery and departmental/unit finances.	
3	Integrates patient quality & safety measures into the care environment.	
4	Formulates objectives and priorities to implement plans of care delivery consistent with long-term interests of the department/unit.	
B	Economics and Policy	
5	Supports alignment of the department with organizational strategies and with current developments in healthcare economics, policy and legislation.	
6	Maintains knowledge of population health.	
7	Influences health care policy through advocacy at various levels of government, as it affects safety, quality, accessibility and affordability of health care.	
C	Regulation	
8	Maintains knowledge of regulatory and accreditation standard/rule changes.	
9	Seeks resources in support of their department/unit's compliance regarding regulatory	
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requirements.

10 Ensures compliance with accreditation standards and local, state, and federal regulatory standards.

11 Participates with response to identified deficiencies.

#### **D Evidence Based Practice**

12 Evaluates current department/unit practices to determine strengths and barriers in implementing evidence-based practices.

13 Promotes integration of evidence-based research into practice at the unit level.

14 Supports staff by providing resources for implementation of evidence-based practices.

#### **E Patient Safety and Quality**

15 Maintains knowledge of patient safety and improvement sciences.

16 Ensures the incorporation of patient safety and improvement sciences with department/unit's practices.

17 Participates in risk assessment (e.g., FMEA, root cause analysis, etc.) to ensure safe, compliant and effective care delivery.

18 Implements processes that result in prompt escalation of potential performance gaps by utilizing system processes and staff at the unit level.

### **3 Leadership**

**25**

#### **A Systems and Complex Adaptive Thinking**

1 Builds a shared vision that articulates and influences others to translate vision into action.

2 Develops new insights into situations by questioning conventional approaches.

3 Encourages staff to develop new and innovative ideas.

4 Removes barriers to help implement new cutting-edge programs/processes.

5 Creates and executes strategies for complex situations (e.g., addressing safety issues with workload capacity, increase nursing time at bedside, reducing hospital acquired conditions (HACs), etc.).

6 Participates in nursing and organizational strategy planning and execution.

#### **B Change Management**

7 Acts as a catalyst for change by seeking new information and ideas.

8 Adapts to new information, changing conditions and unexpected obstacles.

9 Assesses through analytics (e.g., gap analysis, swot, etc.) if change is necessary.

10 Utilizes common change models (e.g., KOTTER, LEWIN) and other tools for change (e.g., PDSA, LEAN methods).

11 Supports staff in managing departmental changes.

#### **C Diversity, Equity, Belonging and Inclusion**

12 Recognizes unconscious and systemic bias occurs in care delivery, business operations, and through external influences.

13 Leads and supports initiatives that address racism, discrimination and bias in care delivery and business operations.

14 Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions.

15 Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and maximized to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.

16 Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the achievement of their goals consistent with the organization's vision and mission corresponding with individual needs.

17 Provides feedback and opportunities for others to learn through formal and informal

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methods corresponding with individual needs.

- 18 Creates, promotes, and protects a culture that supports staff, patients/clients and stakeholders.

#### D Decision Making

- 19 Seizes opportunities and takes calculated risks to advance department/unit's mission and vision.
- 20 Identifies and objectively analyzes department/unit's problems and issues.
- 21 Evaluates availability, relevance and accuracy of information.
- 22 Generates and evaluates alternative solutions.
- 23 Makes decisions that impact department/unit operations and incorporates an understanding of the impact and implications of their decisions.
- 24 Makes timely, equitable, and appropriate decisions when data is available and when it is limited.
- 25 Delegates responsibilities based on scope of practice, education, appropriate competence, and experience.
- 26 Fosters professional governance in philosophy, structure and implementation.
- 27 Empowers team to make independent decisions that affect their practice.

#### E Transformation and Innovation

- 28 Encourages the use of organization's framework on advancing innovation.
- 29 Allocates resources for the development of innovation teams or methods.
- 30 Supports the implementation of innovative ideas.

### 4 Professionalism 14

#### A Professional Accountability

- 1 Upholds professional ethical principles in decision-making through personal, department/unit and staff accountability.
- 2 Supports, promotes and role models standards of nursing and leadership professional practice (clinical, educational, certification and leadership) for colleagues and constituents.
- 3 Solicits feedback from trusted sources about personal strengths and opportunities for improvement and incorporates the information into practice.
- 4 Maintains competency through nationally recognized leadership certification.
- 5 Participates in professional organizations that advance one's leadership practice and career development.
- 6 Encourages staff to engage in their career development.

#### B Organizational Accountability

- 7 Aligns behavior with personal values and determines fit with the organization's culture.
- 8 Ensures the voice of the patient is central and present in decision-making.
- 8 Ensures a culture of accountability by holding self and others accountable for measurable high quality and cost-effective outcomes.
- 10 Follows up regularly with staff to ensure that desired outcomes are being achieved.
- 11 Recognizes career opportunities for staff based on strengths and interests.
- 12 Exhibits leadership presence (e.g., attending team meetings, vocal, fostering discussions, lead rounds, etc.).

#### C Health Equity and Social Determinants of Health

- 13 Reviews organization's needs assessment to identify current health equity issues.

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- 14 Creates action plan to see how to close the gap on department/ unit health equity issues.
- 15 Provides staff with tools and resources to provide culturally competent care (e.g., translation resources, discharge materials, appropriate referrals).
- 16 Supports staff in participation of community-based activities that address community care.
- 17 Coordinates and ~~facilities~~ facilitates orientation related to culturally competent care.
- 18 Evaluates culturally competent care through performance appraisals.
- 19 Monitors performance data to ensure the delivery of culturally competent care.

#### D Governance

- 20 Interacts with and educates the organization's governing body regarding health care and the value of nursing as directed by senior leadership.
- 21 Interacts and educates the organization's governing body regarding quality and patient safety principles as directed by senior leadership.
- 22 Articulates the governing body's (e.g., Board) role in how the organization's mission is achieved.
- 23 Assists leadership in preparing reports for the Board.

### 5 Business Skills and Principles

18

#### A Financial Management

- 1 Manages department budget by understanding and utilizing organization's financial processes.
- 2 Maintains knowledge of reimbursement models that affect care delivery.
- 3 Maintains knowledge of healthcare economics and business models to set priorities and measurable goals.
- 4 Participates in creation of department budget.
- 5 Manages department budget (e.g., allocation of resources, staffing, supply chain management, etc.)
- 6 Monitors department budget to ensure accuracy of expenses and identify variances.
- 7 Makes adjustment of budget as indicated by variances.
- 8 Supports financial health as it is influenced by nursing and other clinical decisions and outcomes.

#### B Strategic Management

- 9 Communicates to staff high reliability concepts (e.g., safety huddles, use of evidence, deferring to expertise, etc.) as identified by the organization.
- 10 Utilizes multiple sources of evidence-based data in goal setting and decision-making.
- 11 Ensures departmental objectives are in place to achieve the strategic mission.
- 12 Participates in the negotiation, monitoring and management of contract and service agreements.
- 13 Aligns and creates nursing/clinical objectives, goals and tactics required to achieve the organization's strategic outcomes.
- 14 Recognizes and supports the benefit and impact of technology on care delivery, clinical information, and financial outcomes.
- 15 Uses evidence-based metrics to align department/unit's goals and objectives with patient outcomes.

#### C Human Resource Management

- 16 Builds and manages a diverse workforce based on organizational, professional nursing, clinical goals and outcomes, data, budget considerations, and staffing needs.

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- 17 Ensures that employees are recruited, selected, onboarded, educated, evaluated, and recognized according to established standards, applicable employment laws, and the organization’s mission vision and values.
- 18 Manages a multisector workforce and a variety of work situations.
- 19 Assesses the unit’s culture to ensure the presence of a safe and healthy work environment.
- 20 Addresses any gaps associated with the cultural assessment of a safe and healthy work environment.
- 21 Advances organizational policies that allow employees to practice at the top of education and or license.
- 22 Establishes mechanisms that provide for identification and mentoring of staff for career progression.

Total

100

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## CNML SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1.

Patient Classification	Number of Patient	Average Care hours (per 24 hours)	Total Unit Workload
1	1,200	2.5	3,000
2	3,200	4.8	15,360
3	2,800	7.9	22,120
4	1,600	12.6	20,160
5	700	21.0	14,700
TOTAL	9,500	48.8	75,340

Based on the information in the table above, what is the average daily census on a 40-bed unit?

- A. 26.0
- B. 29.4
- C. 31.7
- D.

2. A Nurse Manager is requesting a new position of a nurse educator for the upcoming fiscal year. The Chief Nursing Officer has requested a business plan. The Nurse Manager should

- A. develop marketing strategies for the position.
- B. survey nursing staff to assess institutional need.
- C. consult college/university faculty.
- D. quantify long-term objectives.

3. A new Nurse Manager sees opportunities to improve several key performance indicators on the unit. Which of the following is the BEST strategy for the Nurse Manager to employ with staff?

- A. Announce that staff are expected to complete initiatives to improve patient care.
- B. Treat report results as private information to be reviewed by managers only.
- C. Create a monitoring plan and report results frequently to staff.
- D. Continue to observe indicators and develop a plan for future implementation.

4. Professional governance is an example of a

- A. centralized organizational model.
- B. laissez-faire leadership style.
- C. decentralized organizational model.
- D. horizontal centralization.

5. Which of the following is depicted by a Gantt chart?

- A. tasks and progress in relation to time
- B. tasks, duration, and dependency information
- C. dependent tasks that together take the longest time to complete
- D. a process being studied or used to plan stages of a project.

### ANSWER KEY

- 1. A
- 2. D
- 3. C
- 4. C
- 5. A

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