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The Certified Laboratory Equipment Specialist (CLES) Exam

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Through effective standards and educational programs as well as through the positive use of medical instrumentation, the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation (AAMI) works to advance its mission. AAMI is a primary source for the healthcare industry, its related professions, and the government for information on medical instrumentation and technology, including national and international standards. AAMI supports its members by keeping them informed of new technologies and developments in pertinent policies as well as offering them the ability to both enhance their professional skills and improve patient care.



Under the direction of the International Certification Commission (ICC) and the United States Certification Commission (USCC), the Board of Examiners for Biomedical Equipment Technicians maintains several certification programs, one of which is the certification for laboratory equipment specialists. By obtaining certification, clinical engineers and biomedical equipment technicians demonstrate a level of knowledge and competence that allows them to work toward ensuring a healthcare environment that is both safe and reliable. Certification is also a sign to employers that the healthcare professional has made a significant commitment to their career.

- Candidates for this certification must meet certain eligibility requirements, including successfully passing the Certified Laboratory Equipment Specialist (CLES) examination. Depending on their levels of education and work experience, upon passing the examination the individual attains either full certification status or certification candidacy status. An examinee must achieve a minimum score of 105 correct responses out of the total 150 questions in order to pass the CLES examination.
- The CLES examination is comprised of five main subject areas, each containing various sub-topics and areas of knowledge, with the questions for each area weighing a certain percentage of the overall examination score. The first subject area covers the topic of Anatomy and Physiology, requiring the examinee to be familiar with the terminology and body functions, it weighs approximately 13% of the total examination score. This section contains four sub-topics: Systems, Organs, and Blood. The Systems section includes questions on the respiratory, nervous, circulatory, and other systems. The Organs section includes questions on the heart, lung, brain, liver, and other major organs. The questions on the topic of blood cover the components and metabolism of blood.
- Questions in the second main subject area, Public Safety in the Health Care Facility weigh approximately 17% of the overall examination score. The word public is defined as an employee, patient, or visitor. This area covers a variety of topics including electrical, chemical, and biological components, radiation hazards, fire, and codes and standards. The examinee must demonstrate an understanding of safety within the specialty of laboratory equipment.
- The third main subject area is Fundamentals of Electricity, Electronics, and Solid-State Devices; the questions in this area comprise 13% of the overall test score. The topics included in this section are: Transducers, Calculations and Conversions, Devices, Circuits, Test Equipment, Batteries, and Terminology. Specifically, this section covers such items as decimal and binary conversions, passive, active, and digital devices, power supplies, and AC power.
- Questions in the fourth subject area, Medical Equipment Function and Operation, comprise 39% of the overall examination score, and require the examinee to have a broad knowledge of the equipment and instrumentation that is found in the medical environment. These questions cover the various types of equipment, such as common laboratory equipment, urinalysis equipment, blood bank equipment, and hematology equipment. Other questions in this area cover computer hardware and software systems as well as network operating systems, quality control, and specific terminology.

- The final subject area addresses Medical Equipment Problem Solving; the questions comprise approximately 18% of the overall examination score. The questions in this area refer to solving problems relating to the same types of equipment and systems that were covered in the fourth subject area. This subject also includes situational matters, such as whether an issue relates to work prioritization, applications, or the operator rather than the equipment itself.

Why Take the CLES Examination?

The Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation (AAMI) is the primary source for information on medical instrumentation and technology, including providing national and international standards. Under the direction of the International Certification Commission (ICC) and the United States Certification Commission (USCC), the Board of Examiners for Biomedical Equipment Technicians maintains several certification programs, one of which is the certification for laboratory equipment specialists (CLES). In addition to meeting specific academic and/or work experience requirements, an individual must successfully pass the CLES examination in order to earn CLES certification. Why is certification important? There are many valuable personal and professional benefits to obtaining certification.

From a professional standpoint, passing the CLES examination and becoming certified may be required for specific jobs in the biomedical field. Even if certification is not required, by preparing for and successfully passing the CLES examination, individuals demonstrate their knowledge as it relates to the operation, the relevant physiological principles, and the safe application of the various types of biomedical equipment—knowledge that is extremely important in a world of ever-changing and advancing technologies. Supervisors, co-workers, and others in the healthcare industry will know that a certified individual is competent and qualified, and possesses the knowledge to ensure the healthcare environment in which they work is safe and reliable. Certification is indicative of someone who is motivated to maintain the latest job-related skills and of someone who takes pride in what they do.

Another benefit to passing the CLES examination and obtaining certification is that the professional will enjoy increased opportunities for employment and greater earnings potential. Employers know that CLES certification is a standard of competence, and they recognize that an individual who is sufficiently motivated to study and take the CLES examination will likely be equally motivated to do well on the job.

Employers are likely to demonstrate a hiring preference for job applicants who possess certification or promote an employee who is already certified. In addition, salary surveys indicate that biomedical equipment specialists who are CLES-certified can command a higher salary than their non-certified counterparts.

AAMI offers a membership discount for those CLES professionals who have just obtained certification. The individual membership rate to join AAMI is normally \$215; newly-certified individuals can join AAMI for \$105, which represents a substantial savings. By joining AAMI, the CLES individual gains a wealth of additional professional benefits including networking support and career enhancement options, AAMI news, updates, and professional journals, discounts on AAMI items and activities, opportunities to participate in standards development, and much more.

Once the individual has passed the CLES examination and earned certification, in order to maintain certification they must meet specific criteria that allows them to renew it every three years without having to re-take the CLES examination. Renewal is important, as it requires the CLES individual to maintain the professional standards established when they first obtained certification. Renewal of the CLES certification requires attending educational meetings and conferences and participating in professional organizations in order to gain the requisite amount of activity credits or points. The individual must maintain a Continuing Practice Journal in which they document their professional activities over the three-year period, and also pay a certification renewal fee.

By studying and working hard, earning CLES certification from the ICC and meeting the necessary renewal requirements every three years is vitally important for anyone who wants to distinguish themselves in the biomedical field. Professionals who have worked hard to

