

School Memo

To: Cosmetology Schools, Designated School Managers, Instructors
From: Minnesota Board of Cosmetology Staff
Re: Practical Skills Test for Cosmetologists, Estheticians, and Nail Technicians
Date: July 19, 2018
Enclosed: Proposed Practical Skills Test for Cosmetologists, Estheticians, and Nail Technicians

The Minnesota Board of Cosmetology seeks input regarding several proposed changes to the Practical Skills Test offered to cosmetologist, esthetician, and nail technician students in licensed cosmetology schools, and by skills course providers. This memo is intended to notify schools and their staff of the proposed changes and garner input, feedback, and suggestions from schools. We strongly encourage you to distribute this memo to your school staff and any other interested party.

Practical Skills Test Changes

Since October 2017, the Practical Skills Task Force has been working to update the current Practical Skills Test (PST) to reflect current industry standards and school feedback that has been received since the test was implemented. This task force is comprised of 15 licensed instructors and subject matter experts representing public and private schools around the state. The Cosmetologist, Esthetician, and Nail Technician Subcommittee has recently completed an initial draft of the Practical Skills Test Guide and requests your feedback. After the feedback period ends, the task force will review comments and suggestions, then make any necessary changes to the guide before it is approved by the Board.

The enclosed Practical Skills Test Guide represents the task force's work to make the test more efficient, align it to industry standards, and provide additional options for students. Proposed changes from the current PST include, but are not limited to:

Set Up is Graded as Pass/Fail – In the proposed test, the steps outlined in the Set Up section are graded on a pass/fail basis, rather than a numeric grade. You'll see this laid out in each service section. You can think of the Set Up steps similarly to Automatic Fail Incidents – if a student does not complete a Set Up step correctly, they will fail the service section and will need to retake that service section.

All Services Must Be Performed on Models – In the current test, certain service sections are allowed on mannequins. The task force strongly advocated for the provision of all service sections being performed on models, rather than mannequins, to more adequately replicate real world experience.

Wet or Dry Haircut – This draft allows the Haircut Section to be performed using a model’s wet or dry hair to accommodate a wider variety of hair types. As such, the Shampoo Section has been separated from the Haircut Section.

Condensed Styling Sections –The proposed PST has two styling sections. The first is a blow dry style in which the student may choose to use a styling brush to create a smooth, beveled under style or may use a round brush to create a voluminous style. The second styling section is for a thermal style, where a student may choose to use a flat iron for a straight, smooth style or a curling iron for a voluminous style. Both the Blow Dry Style and the Thermal Style Sections must be performed on the entire head of a model.

Single Process Color or Foil – The Hair Color Section requires a student to choose either a single-process, all over color or a foil with at least 12 foils to a top or side section of the model’s head. Either section must be performed with real (not mock) products on a model.

Chemical Relaxer or Perm – This section requires a student to perform either a chemical relaxer or a perm. Either section must be performed with real (not mock) products on a model. This change was proposed by the task force to accommodate the diversity of schools’ student demographics, client populations, and demand for services.

Facial Includes an Extraction – To ensure students can properly perform an extraction, cosmetologist and esthetician students must demonstrate a real or mock manual open comedone extraction during the Facial Section. This must be performed with fingers and cotton, cotton swabs, or a comedone extractor.

Artificial Nail Removal Section – A new addition to the PST! Cosmetologist and nail technician students are now required to safely remove gel or acrylic artificial nails from at least five nails on a model. The goal of this section is to ensure students can remove artificial nails safely and without harming the natural nail.

Infection Control Practical Skills Test – A new addition! This is considered the pre-clinical portion of the PST. As proposed, a student would be required to pass the Infection Control PST before providing services on live models during pre-clinical training, and before providing services the clinic floor. The sections are designed to ensure a student can perform basic infection control and safety procedures according to Board and industry standards. The task force reported that many schools currently offer unique versions of this. The Infection Control PST is a standardized method for all schools to ensure their students are able to safely perform disinfection and blood spill procedures before providing supervised services on the public.

Next Steps

If you have any feedback or suggestions regarding the test, guide, or quotas, please send them to cosmetology@state.mn.us no later than August 1, 2018. Feedback will be compiled and discussed with the Practical Skills Task Force on August 6, 2018.

The updated Practical Skills Test for Cosmetologists, Estheticians, and Nail Technicians is anticipated to be submitted for Board approval at the Board’s December 2018 meeting, with implementation information to follow.