

CIC® Examination Content Outline

Summary of Updates from the 2021 to the 2026 Outlines

CBIC periodically updates the CIC® Examination Content Outline based on the results of a formal Practice/Job Task Analysis, which surveys practicing infection preventionists to ensure the exam reflects current, real-world practice. The exam remains an objective, multiple-choice exam containing 150 questions, 135 of which are scored, and the eight content domains are unchanged. This document summarizes what has changed between the 2021 outline and the updated 2026 outline.

Item Distribution by Domain

The total number of scored items (135) has not changed. However, the distribution of items across domains has shifted to reflect current practice priorities. The most notable changes are an increased emphasis on Education and Research and on Management and Communication, offset by a reduced emphasis on Cleaning, Disinfection, and Sterilization of Medical Devices and Equipment.

Domain	2021 Items	2026 Items	Change
1. Identification / Processes to Identify Infectious Diseases	22	22	No change
2. Surveillance and Epidemiologic Investigation	22	23	+1
3. Preventing/Controlling the Transmission of Infectious Agents	22	22	No change
4. Employee/Occupational Health	11	11	No change
5. Management and Communication (of the Infection Prevention Program)	14	16	+2
6. Education and Research	12	15	+3
7. Environment of Care	14	13	-1
8. Cleaning, Disinfection, Sterilization of Medical Devices and Equipment	18	13	-5
Total	135	135	No change

Key Content Updates by Domain

1. Processes to Identify Infectious Diseases

- Adds explicit content on the cellular structure and characteristics of pathogens (viruses, bacteria, protozoa, fungi) and how they relate clinically.
- Adds explicit recognition of epidemiologically significant organisms and special pathogens/high-consequence infectious diseases (e.g., bacterial and fungal priority pathogen lists, viral hemorrhagic fevers) and staying current through national and international public health authorities (e.g., WHO, CDC).

2. Surveillance and Epidemiologic Investigation

- Adds a new content area on taking action based on surveillance data, including initiating quality improvement plans and formal outbreak investigations.
- Adds content on applying genomic epidemiology, in collaboration with public health laboratories, for outbreak detection and response.
- Broadens outbreak investigation to explicitly include exposure investigations and adds coordination of surveillance activities across the full continuum of care settings.

3. Preventing/Controlling the Transmission of Infectious Agents

- Elevates immunization program leadership to its own content area, including co-leading patient immunization programs and coordinating with occupational health and public health partners.
- Adds specific content on airborne infection isolation room (AIIR) engineering controls, portable HEPA filtration, and respiratory protection programs (fit testing, PAPRs).
- Adds infection prevention oversight of laundry services as part of standard precautions.

4. Employee/Occupational Health

- Content is largely consistent with 2021, with updated examples reflecting current vaccine-preventable disease programs (e.g., hepatitis B, MMR, varicella, influenza, COVID-19).

5. Management and Communication of the Infection Prevention Program

- Adds collaboration with leadership and information technology personnel to integrate technology and data systems into infection prevention workflows.
- Adds building and sustaining a community of practice with regional partner organizations to share data and coordinate outbreak response.

6. Education and Research

- Adds facilitation of infection prevention content in orientation and role-specific onboarding, and support for competency-based education (e.g., link nurses, sterile processing staff).
- Adds more detail on critically appraising literature by evaluating research methodology and distinguishing between peer-reviewed research, guidelines, and narrative reviews.

7. Environment of Care

- Adds evaluation of innovative environmental and operational technologies (e.g., automated waste systems, pneumatic tube systems, robotic linen transport).
- Adds oversight of infection prevention standards for contracted service providers (e.g., environmental services, engineering, temporary staff).

8. Cleaning, Disinfection, Sterilization of Medical Devices and Equipment

- Restructures content into reprocessing oversight and device-specific/technology evaluation, with added detail on high-risk device reprocessing (e.g., endoscopes, ultrasound probes).
- Adds a dedicated content area on investigating and managing suspected or confirmed reprocessing failures, including patient notification and recalls.

What This Means for Candidates

Candidates should prepare using the updated content outline as their primary study guide. While core competencies remain consistent with prior years, the updated outline reflects an increased emphasis on program management, technology integration, education/onboarding, and current infectious disease threats, alongside a more streamlined treatment of device reprocessing topics.