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Draft ASA Competency Framework and Standards for Endometriosis Ultrasound

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ASA Advanced Certification in Endometriosis – Competency Framework and Standards

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1. Overview

Purpose of the Certification

The ASA Advanced Certification in Endometriosis (the Advanced Certification) recognises sonographers who have demonstrated the capability to perform Level 2 endometriosis ultrasound assessment and interpretation as defined in the ASA Endometriosis Guidelines (the Guidelines). The certification supports the development of a sonography workforce progressing from foundational practice towards advanced level imaging that contributes to accurate diagnosis, multidisciplinary care, and improved patient outcomes for individuals affected by endometriosis and related complex gynaecological conditions.

The Advanced Certification supports high-quality, consistent advanced ultrasound practice across diverse clinical settings and aligns with contemporary imaging frameworks. This strengthens the accuracy, consistency and value of ultrasound findings in suspected or confirmed endometriosis, supporting diagnosis, care planning, referral, and management.

Alignment with Guidelines Practice Levels

The competency standards within this framework align with the Level 2 (advanced) endometriosis ultrasound assessment as defined in the Guidelines.

While Level 1 assessment represents foundational, within-scope practice for all sonographers, these standards recognise that advanced endometriosis ultrasound capability is built upon these core professional and clinical competencies. As such, some of the competency units within the framework — particularly those relating to consent, patient-centred care, professional practice, and safety — reflect foundational expectations that remain essential within the context of advanced endometriosis imaging practice. The framework should therefore be interpreted as supporting progression from Level 1 to Level 2 practice with increasing capability in comprehensive compartment-based mapping, advanced dynamic assessment, clinical integration and structured reporting.

The ASA Advanced Certification recognises sonographers who can demonstrate the capabilities required for Level 2 (advanced) endometriosis ultrasound practice.

Certification is a separate process that assesses and recognises achievement of these competencies and is not required to perform endometriosis ultrasound within a sonographer's scope of practice.

Role of Ultrasound in Endometriosis Care

Ultrasound plays a critical role in the investigation and management of endometriosis. Modern transvaginal ultrasound techniques enable identification of ovarian endometriomas, deep endometriosis, adhesions, and associated pelvic pathology. However, ultrasound is a highly operator-dependent modality and some disease, particularly superficial peritoneal endometriosis or small-volume lesions, may not be detectable on imaging, meaning a normal ultrasound does not exclude endometriosis. Accurate imaging is essential to support clinicians in diagnosis, surgical planning, fertility management, and ongoing monitoring of disease.

As endometriosis imaging requires advanced pattern recognition, dynamic assessment techniques, and structured compartment-based examination, sonographers require specialised training and experience to perform these examinations effectively.

Advanced Practice in Endometriosis Ultrasound

Endometriosis ultrasound represents an area of advanced sonographic practice requiring specialised technical skills, diagnostic reasoning, and experience in dynamic pelvic imaging.

The ASA Sonographer Scope of Practice defines advanced practice as:
A practice within the currently recognised scope of practice for the profession, which requires additional training and credentialling at an advanced level, as well as significant Accredited Medical Sonographer experience.

Endometriosis ultrasound examinations require sonographers to integrate detailed anatomical knowledge, structured compartment-based examination techniques, dynamic ultrasound assessment methods, and recognition of complex disease patterns across multiple pelvic structures.

While the assessment of suspected endometriosis falls within the existing scope of practice for sonographers, achieving reliable detection of deep endometriosis and complex pelvic pathology requires additional training and clinical experience. The ASA Advanced Certification provides a mechanism to formally recognise sonographers who have demonstrated competence in this specialised area of practice.

These standards emphasise practice within scope, recognition of diagnostic limitations and appropriate escalation to support safe and high-quality care.

Competency Framework

This competency framework translates evidence-based clinical guidance into assessable professional competencies. The framework provides a structured description of the knowledge, skills, and professional behaviours required for advanced endometriosis ultrasound practice.

The framework is intended to:

- Support consistent, high-quality standards of practice in endometriosis imaging
- Inform education, training and assessment processes for certification
- Provide transparency regarding expectations for sonographers seeking advanced recognition
- Promote high-quality imaging and reporting that supports multidisciplinary care

Structure of Competency Standards

Each competency includes:

- A competency unit describing the capability to be demonstrated
- Performance criteria describing observable behaviours or outcomes
- An assessment category indicating how competency may be evaluated

Application of Competencies

Not all elements of endometriosis ultrasound assessment are expected to be performed in all clinical settings. These competencies define the capabilities required for advanced (Level 2) practice and should be applied in the context of appropriate training, experience, and clinical governance. The Domains reflect a holistic view of advanced practice, including technical scanning skills, diagnostic reasoning, communication, patient-centred care, safety and ongoing professional development. These competencies are aligned with the ASA Endometriosis Guidelines and should be interpreted in conjunction with them.

Competency Domains

1. Professional and Ethical Practice

Describes the professional behaviours, ethical obligations, and patient-centred practices required at an advanced level when performing endometriosis focused ultrasound examinations, including intimate transvaginal ultrasound (TVUS).

2. Advanced Clinical and Technical Performance

Focuses on advanced scanning skills required to perform comprehensive endometriosis ultrasound examinations using structured compartment-based approaches and dynamic assessment techniques.

3. Diagnostic Reasoning and Interpretation

Addresses the analytical and interpretive capabilities required to integrate imaging findings into clinically meaningful diagnostic information.

4. Communication and Multidisciplinary Integration

Describes the communication and reporting skills required to translate imaging findings into information that supports multidisciplinary patient care.

5. Safety, Governance and Quality Assurance

Focuses on maintaining patient safety, recognising high-risk findings, and participating in quality assurance processes that support high-quality imaging services.

6. Reflective Practice and Continuing Professional Development

Recognises the importance of ongoing learning, reflective practice, and professional development required to maintain advanced clinical capability.

2. Competency Standards

Domain 1 – Professional and Ethical Practice

Sonographers demonstrate professional, ethical, and patient-centred practice when performing endometriosis ultrasound examinations. This includes obtaining informed consent, maintaining patient dignity and comfort during intimate examinations, practising in accordance with professional standards and scope of practice, and recognising the limits of personal competence and an understanding of appropriate escalation of complex findings.

Competency Units

1.1 Obtain informed consent for endometriosis-focused TVUS
1.2 Demonstrate patient-centred care during intimate examination
1.3 Apply professional standards in clinical practice
1.4 Demonstrate autonomous advanced practice and appropriate escalation

Competency Unit	Performance Criteria	Guidelines requirement and reference	Assessment Category
1.1 Obtain informed consent for endometriosis-focused TVUS	• Explains the purpose and scope of the examination • Explains dynamic manoeuvres and potential discomfort. • Obtains informed consent prior to examination, including the right to withdraw consent.	Ensures consent and communication align with professional standards Preparation - consent and communication requirements (p.18-19)	Applied Knowledge

	• Discusses the right to a chaperone and allows patient questions as per the ASA guide to consent and chaperones for intimate medical ultrasound examinations • Maintains patient dignity and privacy throughout the consent process		
1.2 Demonstrate patient-centred care during intimate examination	Monitors patient comfort, pauses or ceases the examination if required	Ensures patient comfort and consent throughout examination (p.18-19)	Practical Skills
1.3 Apply professional standards in clinical practice	Maintains professional boundaries and adheres to scope of practice	Professional conduct expectations (p.18-19)	Knowledge
1.4 Demonstrate autonomous advanced practice and appropriate escalation	Identifies and reports complex endometriosis findings	Escalation criteria (appendix 4)	Applied Knowledge

Domain 2 - Advanced Clinical and Technical Performance

Sonographers demonstrate advanced technical proficiency aligned with Level 2 endometriosis ultrasound assessment in performing structured endometriosis-focused ultrasound examinations. This includes integrating relevant clinical history and referral information, comprehensive compartment-based mapping of pelvic anatomy, application of advanced dynamic assessment techniques, accurate identification and characterisation of disease involvement, and acquisition of high-quality diagnostic images in accordance with recognised imaging protocols and frameworks.

Competency Units

2.1 Perform structured endometriosis ultrasound examination
2.2 Demonstrate correct TVUS technique
2.3 Perform and interpret dynamic pelvic assessment
2.4 Perform comprehensive and clinically integrated compartment-based assessment
2.5 Acquire required diagnostic images

Competency Unit	Performance Criteria	Guidelines requirement and reference	Assessment Category
2.1 Perform structured endometriosis ultrasound examination	Demonstrates the ability to perform comprehensive compartment-based endometriosis scanning protocol	Endometriosis-focused ultrasound: minimum practice standard (p.10-13)	Practical Skills
2.2 Demonstrate correct TVUS technique	Positions patient appropriately and performs systematic assessment	Perform systematic TVUS technique Patient positioning and examination technique (p.18–19)	Practical Skills

2.3 Perform and interpret dynamic pelvic assessment	• Demonstrates nuanced interpretation of the sliding sign (positive, negative, restricted) • Assesses the uterovesical sliding sign • Integrates findings with pelvic anatomy • Assesses pouch of Douglas (POD)	Dynamic pelvic assessment, sliding sign (Guidelines p.5) and dynamic assessment (p.11-12)	Practical Skills
2.4 Perform comprehensive and clinically integrated compartment-based assessment	Explicitly references assessments of: • posterior compartment • anterior compartment • adnexa and pelvic sidewalls (using recognised frameworks such as IDEA, #Enzian) • Integrates clinical history and presenting symptoms into assessment approach	Comprehensive compartment-based mapping of pelvic anatomy and disease distribution. (p.12–13)	Practical Skills
2.5 Acquire required diagnostic images	Select and acquire diagnostically appropriate images and cine clips to support structured reporting	Capture minimum diagnostic images Core image set (p.14–15)	Practical Skills

Domain 3 – Diagnostic Reasoning and Interpretation

Sonographers demonstrate advanced diagnostic reasoning by integrating clinical history, referral information and ultrasound findings across pelvic structures to produce clinically meaningful assessments. This includes recognising the spectrum of endometriosis manifestations and related pelvic pathology, distinguishing pathology from normal variants, and synthesising imaging findings within the broader clinical context.

Competency Units

3.1 Identify and map endometriosis disease involvement
3.2 Interpret sliding sign findings
3.3 Recognise limitations of ultrasound
3.4 Integrate image findings into clinical context

Competency Unit	Performance Criteria	Guidelines requirement and reference	Assessment Category
3.1 Identify and map deep endometriosis disease involvement across pelvic compartments	Identifies and documents disease involvement across nodules in the pelvic sidewalls, uterine regions, and the anterior and posterior compartments, and the involved organs and organ systems	Level 2 mapping (p.12-13)	Applied Knowledge
3.2 Interpret sliding sign findings	Differentiates positive, restricted, and negative sliding sign	Dynamic assessment (p.11-12)	Applied Knowledge

3.3 Recognise limitations of ultrasound	• Recognises technical, patient-related and operator dependent limitations of ultrasound assessment • Understands that imaging has reduced sensitivity for some regions • Recognises that a normal ultrasound does not exclude endometriosis, particularly superficial or small-volume disease	Assessments, limitations of imaging (p.9)	Knowledge
3.4 Integrate image findings into clinical context	Correlates imaging with symptoms Identifies findings relevant to: • surgical planning • multidisciplinary team care Avoids over-interpretation of non-specific findings	Role of ultrasound in clinical decision making (p.9-10)	Knowledge

Domain 4 – Communication and Multidisciplinary Integration

Sonographers communicate ultrasound findings clearly and effectively to support clinical decision-making and multidisciplinary care. This includes producing structured, reproducible reports using recognised endometriosis imaging frameworks, incorporating relevant clinical history, applying staging or classification frameworks within individual scope and local governance without assigning surgical stage unless agreed locally, and conveying findings in a manner that supports diagnosis, treatment planning and patient management.

Competency Units

4.1 Produce structured clinically relevant reports
4.2 Communicate clinically relevant findings
4.3 Support multidisciplinary care
4.4 Demonstrate understanding of clinical pathway
4.5 Apply standardised endometriosis imaging and reporting frameworks

Competency Unit	Performance Criteria	Guidelines requirement and reference	Assessment Category
4.1 Produce structured clinically relevant reports	• Documents structures assessed and key findings • Documents site-specific tenderness and reproduction of symptoms where clinically relevant during dynamic assessment • Describes disease location, extent, and anatomical relationships	Structured reporting of findings, relationships, and limitations (p.13)	Applied Knowledge

	• Reports organ mobility, adhesions, and relevant features • Communicates limitations of the examination including regions not imaged due to pain or anatomy		
4.2 Communicate clinically relevant findings	Reports nodule location, size, organ involvement and mobility	Reporting requirements (p.13)	Applied Knowledge
4.3 Support multidisciplinary care	Communicates findings relevant to surgical planning	Role of ultrasound in care planning (p.9-10)	Applied Knowledge
4.4 Demonstrate understanding of clinical pathway	Demonstrates awareness of role in broader clinical management	Background and purpose (p.4-6)	Knowledge
4.5 Apply standardised endometriosis imaging and reporting frameworks	• Applies recognised frameworks (IDEA, MUSA, IOTA, #Enzian, UBESS) • Uses standardised terminology and structure • Supports consistent reporting and clinical communication	Use of standardised frameworks to support consistent reporting and care (p.5 and 13)	Applied Knowledge

Domain 5 – Safety, Governance & Quality Assurance

Sonographers demonstrate safe and accountable clinical practice by maintaining patient safety during examinations, recognising high-risk findings requiring escalation, and adhering to professional, workplace, and quality assurance standards that support safe and high-quality imaging services.

Competency Units

5.1 Maintain patient safety during examination
5.2 Participate in quality assurance processes
5.3 Maintain imaging documentation accuracy
5.4 Demonstrate diagnostic risk awareness
5.5 Apply scope-appropriate practice and escalation pathways
5.6 Maintain sonographer health and safety, and apply sustainable workload practices

Competency Unit	Performance Criteria	Guidelines requirement and reference	Assessment Category
5.1 Maintain patient safety during examination	Maintains patient safety and comfort during examination	Preparation and scanning considerations (p.18–19)	Practical Skills
5.2 Participate in quality assurance processes	Demonstrates understanding of audit and reporting review processes	Implementation and monitoring (p.8–9)	Knowledge
5.3 Maintain imaging documentation accuracy	Ensures completeness of imaging documentation	Maintain reporting accuracy (p.13)	Applied Knowledge

5.4 Demonstrate diagnostic risk awareness	Recognises potential diagnostic limitations and false positives	Recognise diagnostic risk and limitations (p.4-5)	Applied Knowledge
5.5 Apply scope-appropriate practice and escalation pathways	• Recognises when findings exceed individual capability • Recommends referral to advanced or tertiary imaging services in cases of suspected bowel DE, possible ureteric obstruction or hydronephrosis, and complete POD obliteration • Avoids overconfident or unsupported interpretation	Escalation; Consideration of harms and scope (p.11-12)	Applied Knowledge
5.6 Maintain sonographer health and safety, and apply sustainable workload practices	Demonstrates correct ergonomic set up for examinations and reports occupational health hazards	Sonographer health, workload, and WRMSD risk (p.6, 7-8, 11-12)	Applied Knowledge

Domain 6 - Reflective Practice and Continuing Professional Development

Sonographers demonstrate commitment to ongoing professional development and reflective practice to maintain advanced competence in endometriosis ultrasound. This includes engaging in continuing education, evaluating personal performance, incorporating feedback, and maintaining competence through ongoing learning and professional activities.

Competency Units

6.1 Maintain professional competence
6.2 Integrates updated guidelines into clinical practice
6.3 Participate in reflective clinical practice

Competency Unit	Performance Criteria	Guidelines requirement and reference	Assessment Category
6.1 Maintain professional competence	Participates in training and skill development	Implementation and workforce section (p.6-8)	Knowledge
6.2 Integrate updated guidelines into clinical practice	Integrates updated guidelines into clinical practice	Guideline development and implementation (p.4-6)	Knowledge
6.3 Participate in reflective clinical practice	Engages in audit, peer review and case discussion	Monitoring and evaluation (p.6-8)	Applied Knowledge

3. Assessments

Assessment approach

Competency will be assessed using a combination of knowledge-based assessment, applied clinical reasoning evaluation, and practical skills assessment. This multi-method approach ensures that both theoretical knowledge and practical scanning are appropriately evaluated for advanced certification.

Assessment methods will be aligned to the competency domains and assessment categories to ensure a structured and consistent evaluation of knowledge, clinical reasoning, and practical skills.

Examples of assessment methods may include:

- Online theoretical examination
- Case-based image interpretation
- Objective structured clinical examination (OSCE)
- Workplace based experience and logbook review

Assessment categories

Knowledge: Theoretical understanding of anatomy, pathology, frameworks, guidelines

Applied Knowledge: Integration of knowledge with clinical reasoning and decision-making

Practical Skills: Hands-on scanning technique, dynamic assessment, image acquisition

Summary Table by Domain

Domain	Knowledge Units	Applied Knowledge Units	Practical Skills Units
1. Professional & Ethical Practice	1.3	1.1, 1.4	1.2
2. Advanced Clinical & Technical Performance	—	—	2.1–2.5
3. Diagnostic Reasoning & Interpretation	3.3 – 3.4	3.1–3.2	—
4. Communication & MDT Integration	4.4	4.1,4.3,4.5	
5. Safety, Governance & QA	5.2	5.3-5.6	5.1
6. Reflective Practice & CPD	6.1, 6.2	6.3	6.3