



Promoting Excellence in Nursing Certification

Accreditation Standards

ABSNC is the only accrediting body specifically for nursing-related certification programs. Nursing certification organizations may attain accreditation by demonstrating compliance with the 18 standards established by the ABSNC.

ABSNC is an approved accrediting agency for the National Council of State Boards of Nursing's Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) Certification Review Program.

Standard 1 Definition and Scope of Nursing Specialty

The certification examination program is based on a distinct and well-defined field of nursing practice that subscribes to the overall purpose and functions of nursing. The nursing specialty is distinct from other nursing specialties and is national in scope. There is an identified need for the specialty and nurses who devote most of their practice to the specialty.

Standard 2 Research Based Body of Knowledge

A body of research-based knowledge related to the nursing specialty exists. Mechanisms have been established for the support, review, and dissemination of research and knowledge in the specialty. Activities within the specialty contribute to the advancement of nursing science within the specialty.

Standard 3 Organizational Autonomy

The certifying organization is an entity with organizational autonomy governed in part or in whole by certified nursing members.

Standard 4 Nondiscrimination

The certifying organization does not discriminate among candidates as to age, sex, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Standard 5 Public Representation

The certifying organization includes at least one Public Member with full voting rights on its Board of Directors.

Standard 6 Eligibility Criteria for Test Candidates

The eligibility criteria for non-RN nursing team member certification include:

- Licensure or registration as required
- Education and/or experiential qualifications defined by the certifying organization

The eligibility criteria for specialty RN nursing certification include:

- Current RN licensure
- Educational and experiential qualifications as determined by the certifying organization

The eligibility criteria for advanced practice nursing certification include:

- RN licensure
- A minimum of a graduate degree in nursing or the appropriate equivalent, including content in the specific area of advanced specialty practice

The eligibility criteria for advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) certification include:

- RN licensure
- Completion of a graduate degree program in nursing or the appropriate equivalent (or post-master's or post-doctoral certification program) from an accredited program in one of the four APRN roles across at least one of six APRN population foci as described in the 2008 Consensus Document.
- Three separate courses in advanced pathophysiology across the life span, advanced health/physical assessment, and advanced pharmacology as part of graduate educational preparation
- A minimum of 500 clinical hours as part of graduate educational preparation

Standard 7 Validity

The certifying organization has conducted validation studies to assure inferences made on the basis of test scores are appropriate and justified

Standard 8 Test Development

Certification examinations are constructed and evaluated using methods that are psychometrically sound and fair to all candidates.

Standard 9 Reliability

The certifying organization assures test scores, including sub scores, are sufficiently reliable for their intended uses.

Standard 10 Test Administration

The certification examination is administered in a manner that minimizes construct-irrelevant variance and maintains examination security.

Standard 11 Test Security

Procedures are in place to maximize the security of all certification examination materials.

Standard 12 Passing Scores

Passing score for the certification examination is set in a manner that is fair to all candidates, using criterion referenced methods and equating and scaling procedures that are psychometrically sound.

Standard 13 Recertification and Continuing Competence

The certifying organization has a recertification program in place that requires certifications to maintain current knowledge and to provide documentation showing how competence in the specialty is maintained and/or measured over time.

Standard 14 Communications

The certifying organization provides information that clearly describes the certification and recertification process to candidates, certificants, and other stakeholders.

Standard 15 Confidentiality

The certifying organization assures confidential information about candidates and certificants is protected.

Standard 16 Appeals

The certifying organization has an appeal process available to candidates/certificants who have been denied recertification or access to an examination, or who have had certification revoked.

Standard 17 Misrepresentation and Noncompliance

The certifying organization has a mechanism in place to respond to instances of misrepresentation and noncompliance with eligibility criteria or the certifying organization's policies; this mechanism includes reporting cases of misrepresentation and noncompliance to appropriate authorities.

Standard 18 Quality Improvement

The certifying organization shall have an internal audit and management review system in place, including provisions for continuous corrective and preventive actions for quality improvement.