

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ABSNC ACCREDITATION

1. What is the difference between ABNS and ABSNC?

ABNS (American Board of Nursing Specialties, Inc.) is a not-for-profit, membership organization consisting of specialty nursing certification organizations and governed by an elected group of member organization representatives. ABNS is focused on improving patient outcomes and consumer protection by promoting specialty nursing certification. The ABNS mission statement is "to promote the value of specialty nursing certification to all stakeholders."

ABSNC (Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification, Inc.), formerly known as the ABNS Accreditation Council, is the only accrediting body specifically for nursing certification. ABSNC accreditation provides a peer-review mechanism that allows nursing certification organizations to obtain accreditation of their certification programs by demonstrating compliance with the highest quality standards available in the industry.

2. Who are the members of ABSNC?

Per the [ABSNC Bylaws](#), all nursing certification organizations with certification programs accredited by ABSNC are members of ABSNC.

3. Is membership in ABNS a requirement to submit an accreditation application to ABSNC?

No. Nursing certifying organizations interested in applying for accreditation are not required to be ABNS members to apply. However, ABNS members receive a discount on the accreditation application fee. Because ABNS represents nearly 500,000 certified nurses across the United States and Canada, certification organizations will find membership beneficial.

4. How does ABSNC define nursing specialty?

Standard 1 of the [ABSNC Accreditation Standards](#) provides detailed information about how a nursing specialty is defined, using the American Nurses Association (ANA) definition and criteria as found in the American Nurses Association Social Policy Statement (ANA, Nursing Social Policy Statement: The Essence of the Profession, 3rd Edition, 2010, ANA.)

5. What is the difference between ABSNC and NCCA accreditation?

The ABSNC, formerly known as the Accreditation Council of the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS), is an autonomous, independent board with the authority for all accreditation decisions and functions. It is the only national accrediting body specifically for nursing certification. ABSNC accreditation is a peer-review mechanism that allows nursing certification organizations to obtain accreditation by demonstrating compliance with the highest standards available in the industry.

The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) is the accrediting division of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (formerly the National Organization for Competency

Assurance). Like ABNS, ICE is a member-based organization dedicated to providing educational, networking and advocacy resources to credentialing organizations. However, unlike the ABSNC which only accredits nursing specialty certification programs, NCCA accredits any certification programs in a variety of industries that meet the *NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs*.

6. What exactly does ABSNC accredit – a nursing certifying organization or a certification examination?

Neither. ABSNC accredits a nursing certifying organization's entire certification *program*.

7. Who should an organization contact for questions about accreditation and/or the standards?

For questions about ABSNC accreditation, please contact Bonnie Niebuhr, ABNS CEO at bniebuhr@nursingcertification.org or call 330-995-9172. If an organization has an accreditation application under review, Ms. Niebuhr is the conduit for questions and answers with the Review Team reviewing an application.

8. When should an application be submitted to ABSNC for accreditation review?

If seeking accreditation of an organization's certification program for the first time, an application may be submitted to ABSNC at any time throughout the year. However, to submit an application, an applicant organization must have examination statistics data to report for at least one year of testing or for a minimum of 200 candidates, whichever occurs first. In addition, all other ABSNC accreditation criteria must be addressed.

9. Does ABSNC accept an electronic submission of an accreditation application?

Yes. Instructions regarding electronic submission (*ABSNC Instructions for Submitting an Accreditation Application*) are found on the ABNS/ABSNC website at www.nursingcertification.org under the Accreditation section. Beginning January 1, 2011, **only** electronic submissions will be accepted. Paper applications may be submitted until that time; however applicant organizations are encouraged to submit applications electronically now.

10. What are the requirements for reaccreditation?

An accredited organization must seek reaccreditation every five years. An organization seeking reaccreditation of a certification program must demonstrate compliance with *all* of the current Accreditation Standards. A complete application must be submitted as described in the [ABSNC Instructions for Submitting an Accreditation Application](#). There is no shorter process for preparing an application for reaccreditation.

11. If ABSNC finds that a nursing certifying organization's accreditation application is incomplete, or compliance with a standard is not demonstrated, what happens next?

ABSNC provides applicants the opportunity to submit additional materials up to two times for review. After that, if compliance with all standards is not demonstrated, they may either start

the process over again, including payment of application fees, or request an appeal of the decision to deny accreditation.

12. May an applicant organization appeal a denial to their accreditation application?

If an accreditation application is denied, the applicant organization is notified in writing, and the policy for requesting a *Reconsideration and Appeal of Accreditation Decisions* is included. The request for reconsideration of the decision or appeal must be submitted to ABSNC within the timeframe indicated in the written notice.

13. What happens if an organization retires, or no longer offers an accredited certification program?

ABSNC recognizes two categories of “retired” programs:

1. “Retired” programs that are no longer operational, hence no longer exist. In this case, accreditation is not an issue.
2. “Retired” programs that continue to operate, no longer credential additional practitioners, but continue to offer recertification to current certificants. If an examination is no longer offered compliance with *all* Accreditation Standards cannot be demonstrated and reaccreditation will not be granted. The nursing certifying organization has a responsibility to inform Certificants that such programs will no longer be accredited despite the fact that Certificants may continue to recertify.

14. What is the difference between an assessment-based certificate programs, certificates of attendance or participation, and professional or personnel certification programs?

The Institute for Credentialing Excellence (formerly known as NOCA) distinguishes between assessment-based certificate programs, certificates of attendance or participation, and professional or personnel certification programs based on the following 12 key aspects:

- Primary focus of the program
- Content of the program and how it is identified
- Program oversight
- Provider role in education and training
- Education and training requirements and prerequisites
- Assessment
- Validation of assessment content
- Standard setting
- Evaluation of assessments
- Credential maintenance
- Identification of individuals who have completed program
- Statement of program purpose

Additional information about the differences can be found in the ICE paper [online](#).

15. Does ABSNC accredit assessment-based certificate programs?

No. At this time, ABSNC accredits only those nursing certification programs that meet all 18 ABSNC standards.

16. What is LACE?

LACE, an organization with representatives from Licensure, Accreditation, Certification, and Education bodies, was developed to maximize congruence among licensure, accreditation, certification, and education to enhance the capacity of APRNs to deliver safe and effective care. It is comprised of organizations that impact the four entities listed above. Its functions are to:

1. Lead the rapid implementation of the APRN consensus model;
2. Monitor and evaluate the progress toward implementation and its impact;
3. Adapt the APRN consensus model in response to changing environments;
4. Synchronize the mutual efforts of the LACE entities and relevant APRN stakeholder groups;
5. Serve as an authoritative resource on APRN LACE issues and emerging trends.

17. What role does ABNS/ABSNC have in LACE?

As a representative at the LACE table ABSNC has a role in supporting and explaining LACE to the nursing certification community, and influencing the implementation of the APRN regulatory model. ABSNC is positioned to serve as a conduit for information to the specialty nursing certification community and to promote congruence between the APRN regulatory model with specialty nursing certification and accreditation requirements. Information is shared with ABNS and its member organizations in the [resources section](#) .

18. Is the ABSNC accreditation of an APRN certification program recognized by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing?

Yes. The ABSNC accreditation of an advanced practice certification program is recognized by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN). Thus APRN certification programs approved by ABSNC have demonstrated compliance with the NCSBN criteria for APRN certification programs. This information is available on the ABSNC website <http://www.nursingcertification.org/accreditation-aprn.html>.

19. How can an individual serve on the ABSNC Board of Directors?

An individual interested in serving on the ABSNC Board of Directors first must be a designated representative of an organization with an ABSNC-accredited certification program. When a call for nominations is issued, the interested individual is encouraged to self-nominate for a board position. New members are elected from a slate of candidates by representatives of certifying organizations with ABSNC-accredited certification programs. Elections occur in conjunction with the Spring ABNS Assembly meeting.

(October 20, 2010)