

ABNS

American Board of Nursing Specialties

Promoting Excellence in Nursing Certification

Accreditation Standards

ABNS is the only accrediting body specifically for nursing certification programs. Both ABNS members and non-members are eligible for accreditation. Nursing certification organizations may attain accreditation by demonstrating compliance with the nineteen standards established by ABNS.

ABNS 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 tested body of research/data-based knowledge related to the nursing specialty exists. Mechanisms are established for the support, review, and dissemination of research 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. However, a collaborative relationship exists between the certifying organization and a national or international nursing specialty association that supports the nursing specialty and the standards for specialty practice.

Standard 4 Non Discrimination

The certifying organization does not discriminate among candidates as to age, gender, race, religion, ethnic origin, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.

Standard 5 Public Representation

The certifying organization (certifying governing body) includes at least one public member with voting rights.

Standard 6 Eligibility Criteria for Test Candidates

The eligibility criteria for basic specialty certification include:

- RN licensure
- Educational and experiential qualifications as determined by the individual specialty 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 specified area of specialty practice

Standard 7 Validity

The certifying organization has conducted validation studies to assure that 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 that test scores, including subscores, are sufficiently reliable for their intended uses.

Standard 10 Test Administration

The certification examination(s) are administered in a manner that minimizes construct-irrelevant variance

Standard 11 Test Security

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

Standard 12 Passing Scores

Passing scores for the certification examination(s) are set in a manner that is fair to all candidates, using methods that are psychometrically sound.

Standard 13 Continued Competency

The certifying organization has a recertification program in place that requires certificants to maintain current knowledge and to periodically document the knowledge necessary to maintain competence in the specialty.

Standard 14 Communications

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

Standard 15 Confidentiality

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

Standard 16 Appeals

The certifying organization has an appeal process in place for candidates/certificants who have been denied access to an examination or renewal of certification or who have had certification revoked.

Standard 17 Misrepresentation and Non-Compliance

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

Standard 18 Quality Improvement

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

*For information about ABNS and/or its Accreditation Standards, contact ABNS at
610 Thornhill Lane, Aurora, OH 44202 330-995-9172 330-995-9743 (fax) ABNSCEO@aol.com*