

Summary of Standards Revisions 2015-2016

The Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification, as part of its quality improvement initiatives, completes a thorough biennial review of its standards and criteria for accreditation. While not compromising the intent and rigor of the standards, the board does respond to current industry standards as well as members' and applicants' questions/suggestions. Narratives and criteria found in the application are modified occasionally to ensure the standards are clear and succinct, and continue to reflect best practices.

The following changes were approved on July 13, 2016, after a defined period of public comment. In addition, clarifications or edits were made to other criteria through changes in grammar or the addition of suggested examples.

July 13, 2016 (Effective January 1, 2017):

- **Standard 6: Eligibility Criteria for Test Candidates**
 - A definition of grandfathering was added to the rationale for this standard, along with a description of the very limited circumstances in which this process would be acceptable for certification programs: "*Grandfathering grants certification to individuals without requiring them to take the certification examination. It is permitted only with initial creation of the certification examination to award the credential to SMEs who meet all eligibility requirements but participate in the development, review, and/or approval of test items, to include standard setting procedures. These SMEs cannot take the examination because of their familiarity with the items and may be granted initial certification through grandfathering.*"
 - *Board members have determined "grandfathering must be terminated before application for accreditation is made. Once a certification program is accredited by ABSNC, grandfathering or any other process for granting certification without examination is not allowed. See also Standard 13, Continuing Competence, for application to recertification. To continue grandfathering presents undesirable risks to the credibility of the credential."*
 - To ensure adherence to this practice, a new Standard 6.4 was added: "Submit policies and procedures describing the time period in which an individual cannot take the certification examination because of participation in item development, review, and/or approval, to include standard setting. Policies and procedures should stipulate recertification cannot be achieved by retesting during the defined time period."
 - *In addition, the revised standard clarified best practice concerning **honorary certification**: "The granting of honorary certification without candidates meeting all eligibility requirements for the certification is not consistent with accurate representation of the credential, and may result in public confusion regarding who in fact has met eligibility requirements."*
- **Standard 13: Recertification and Continuing Competence**
 - *In keeping with changes to Standard 6 regarding grandfathering, the rationale for this standard now includes the following: "Grandfathering (see Standard 6, Eligibility) may have been used to grant initial certification before accreditation of a certification program. Once a certification program is accredited by ABSNC, however, grandfathering is not allowed. To ensure continuing competence, then, any certificant who received his or her initial credential by grandfathering must meet the same recertification requirements as other certificants who passed the certification examination. To continue grandfathering presents undesirable risks to the credibility of the credential."*

- **Standard 18: Quality Improvement**
 - To recognize the importance of stakeholders' contributions to quality improvement and decision making of certification organizations, ABSNC board members approved an additional Standard 18.3: "Identify the certifying organization's stakeholder groups and how stakeholder input is sought, whenever possible and reasonable, to inform organizational decision making."
 - *Please note that a policy and procedure are neither requested nor required for this standard. Applicants simply should describe their processes for seeking and considering stakeholder input. Examples may include, but are not limited to, online surveys and focus groups at the annual membership meeting.*
- **A January 1, 2017, effective date has been selected for the revised certification standards. ABSNC board members believe certifying organizations with programs eligible for accreditation generally self-limit their use of grandfathering and do not offer honorary credentials. In addition, leaders of certifying organizations often seek stakeholder input as a matter of course. Thus these revisions will ask applicants to describe processes likely already in place as a matter of best practice. Applications submitted on or after January 1, 2017, should use the revised standards dated July 13, 2016.**