

**BOARD OF NURSE EXAMINERS FOR THE STATE OF TEXAS**  
**333 GUADALUPE STREET, SUITE 3-460**  
**AUSTIN, TX 78701**

**Criteria for Evaluation of National Certification Examinations for Recognition from the Board of Nurse Examiners**

**Purpose:** The following criteria are established for the purpose of evaluating new and existing advanced practice certification examinations recognized by the Board of Nurse Examiners.

- I. The certification program meets the following criteria:
  - A. The program offers a certification process for a recognized advanced practice category
  - B. A national organization exists that establishes standards and a scope of practice for the advanced practice nursing specialty.
  - C. A significant body of knowledge exists within the specialty area to form a basis for practice.
  - D. It is national in scope.
  - E. There is a provision for public representation on the certification board
  - F. The certification board is an entity with organizational autonomy.
  
- II. The certification process is consistent with acceptable standards of the testing community
  - A. Eligibility criteria are:
    - 1. Independent of professional organization membership
    - 2. Rationally related to competence to practice safely (e.g., current RN licensure, program completion, experience requirements)
    - 3. Published
    - 4. Enforced consistently
  - B. Application materials are available and include:
    - 1. Application form
    - 2. Certification requirements/eligibility criteria

3. Procedures for handling omissions and discrepancies on the application form
  4. Frequency and accessibility of examination
- C. Internal organizational procedures must include:
1. Verification that the applicant's educational preparation and clinical experiences match the specialty being certified
  2. Validation of the information provided by the applicant
  3. Procedures for handling omissions and discrepancies
  4. Formal training program for staff responsible for credential review and eligibility decisions
  5. Periodic review of eligibility criteria and application procedures to ensure that they are fair and equitable
- D. The examination is administered at least semi-annually
- E. Testing conditions are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act
- III. Educational requirements are consistent with the requirements of the advanced practice specialty
- A. Current US registered nurse licensure is required to obtain certification
- B. All individuals, **without exception**, seeking national certification must complete a formal didactic and clinical advanced educational program meeting the following criteria:
1. Accredited by a national accrediting body
  2. Offered at the graduate level with a concentration in the advanced nursing practice specialty in which the applicant is seeking certification
  3. Post-master's certificate programs must be offered through institutions that meet the criteria in III.B.1 and 2.
  4. The curriculum meets the following criteria:
    - a. Inclusion of biological, behavioral, social, medical and nursing sciences relevant to practice as an advanced practice nurse in the specified category
    - b. Inclusion of legal, ethical and professional responsibilities of the advanced practice nurse

- c. Faculty supervised clinical experiences encompassing the full scope of practice within the role and specialty
    - d. Curriculum is consistent with competencies of the specific areas of practice
    - e. Instructional track/major has a minimum of 500 supervised clinical hours
- IV. Examination development strategies are designed to promote validity and are acceptable to the testing community
  - A. Exam content is based on a practice (job/task) analysis that:
    - 1. Is conducted at least every five years
    - 2. Demonstrates evidence of the content validity of the practice analysis study
    - 3. Includes activities representing knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for competent performance
    - 4. Is published and available to the public
  - B. Development/Review of an exam for entry level practice in the advanced practice specialty is described, including the following information:
    - 1. Process used for examination development
    - 2. Process to assure the exam measures minimum entry level competence
    - 3. Frequency of reviews
    - 4. Qualifications of the group making the determination
    - 5. Geographic representation
    - 6. Professional and/or regulatory organizations involved in the reviews
  - C. Test blueprint is based on:
    - 1. Entry level practice
    - 2. Knowledge, skills and abilities that are critical to public safety
    - 3. Curricular requirements and practice analysis for the role and specialty
    - 4. Current standards of care

- D. Examination items are based on the test blueprint
    - 1. All items must be from categories appearing on the test blueprint
    - 2. Items are reviewed for currency before initial use and at least every three years
    - 3. A process exists to evaluate and address bias
  - E. There is a process to prevent utilization of test items for certification until reliability and validity data are established.
  - F. Guidelines for reusing items are identified
  - G. Item writing and review is done by qualified individuals who represent the specialties
- V. Evaluation of psychometric performance is consistent with accepted standards of the testing community
- A. Reference groups for comparative analysis are defined
  - B. The passing standard is established using psychometric methods and is reevaluated periodically
  - C. Psychometric performance and passing standard are evaluated on a set schedule
  - D. The passing standard is criterion-referenced
  - E. A process exists to ensure reliability
- VI. Examination security is maintained through established procedures. A process exists to maintain security related to:
- A. Item development (e.g., item writers and confidentiality, how often items are re-used)
  - B. Maintenance of question pool
  - C. Printing and production process
  - D. Storage and transportation of examination
  - E. Administration of examination (e.g., who administers, who checks administrators)
  - F. Ancillary materials (e.g., test keys, scrap materials)

- G. Scoring of examination
  - H. Occurrence of a crisis (e.g., exam is compromised, etc)
- VII. Certification is issued based upon passing the examination and verification of all other certification requirements
- A. Certification process is described, including the following:
    - 1. Criteria for certification decisions are identified
    - 2. Certification is not issued until verification of passing exam results and all other requirements are met
    - 3. Procedures are in place for appealing decisions
  - B. There is due process for situations such as nurses denied access to the examination or who have had their certification revoked
  - C. A mechanism is in place for communicating with the applicant
  - D. Confidentiality of nonpublic candidate data is maintained
- VIII. A retake policy is in place
- A. Criteria for eligibility to retest are defined
  - B. Failing candidates are informed of the eligibility and procedure for retesting
  - C. Test for repeating examinee:
    - 1. Is equivalent to the test for first time candidates
    - 2. Requires repeating examinees to meet the same test performance standards as first time examinees
  - D. Candidates who fail are given information on content areas of deficiency
  - E. Process is in place to minimize exposure to the same exam items
- IX. Certification maintenance program that includes review of qualifications and continued competence is in place
- A. Certification maintenance requirements are defined (e.g., continuing education, practice, examination) and are applied consistently
  - B. Certification maintenance procedures include:

1. Procedures for assuring match between continued competency measures and the advanced practice specialty
  2. Procedures for validating information provided by candidates
  3. Procedures for issuing re-certification
- C. Professional staff oversee credential review

Adopted 10/2003.