



**ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES
INSTRUCTIONS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION**

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Introduction

The Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC), defines certification as the formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills, and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes. The ultimate goal of professional certification is to assist consumers in making informed choices regarding their health-care practitioners. To that end, ABSNC provides an accreditation process for specialty nursing certification programs. ABSNC accreditation signifies compliance with rigorous standards for certification programs and is a further testament to the public of the high quality and credibility of an individual nurse's certification credential.

ABSNC History

Following three years of dialogue within the nursing community to create uniformity in nursing certification and to increase public awareness of the value of quality certification to health care, the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) was incorporated in 1991. The development effort was generously supported by the Macy Foundation. Soon afterward, the ABSN created the Accreditation Council, an autonomous accrediting body within the organization. In 2007, ABNS began a process for creating a separate, autonomous body to perform the accreditation function. By 2009, the ABNS Accreditation Council was renamed the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC) and a separate corporation was established.

The ABSNC is governed by an elected Board of Directors. Each board member represents an organization with at least one accredited certification program.

The ABSNC maintains a website, www.absnc.org. The website details all information regarding the governance and accreditation of the organization.

Accreditation Standards

Each organization applying for certification must demonstrate that the nursing certification program meets all standards of ABSNC. A standard is defined as "an authoritative principle or rule that provides a model or pattern of guidance." Each standard includes a rationale providing an explanation of the meaning of the standard and its importance. The criteria for each standard can be considered the basis for making judgments about the certification program's ability to meet the standard. Additionally, required documentation for each standard is outlined.

Compliance with all standards must be demonstrated for initial accreditation and reaccreditation to be granted. Reviewers will determine if an application meets the criteria based on the documentation provided. To be approved for accreditation, certifying organizations must provide the requested evidence (e.g., policy and procedure, description/narrative) that each criterion is met.

Initial accreditation applications must demonstrate compliance with the most current Accreditation Standards as posted at www.absnc.org. Because the time required to prepare an accreditation application can be lengthy, organizations are advised to check the website regularly to ensure they are using the most current version of the Accreditation Standards.

When is an Organization Ready to Submit an Initial Accreditation Application?

In addition to being able to submit documentation of compliance with each standard, a certifying organization must have certification statistics data to report for at least 1 year of certification or for a minimum of 100 candidates, whichever occurs first.

Submission of a Letter of Intent

An organization seeking initial accreditation from ABSNC must submit an electronic Letter of Intent to the ABSNC office at info@absnc.org at least 90 calendar days before application submission.

Application Process

The application process is designed to allow the applicant organization to demonstrate a certification program meets each ABSNC Standard by assessing the certification program and providing evidence of compliance with the ABSNC Standards. Additional information or clarification may be requested of the organization submitting an application. Whenever additional information is requested more than three times, the applicant organization must resubmit the application and associated fees.

Applications for initial accreditation may be submitted at any time during the year. Each application will be evaluated individually by an ABSNC Review Team. Every effort is made to complete the application review and determination of accreditation status within 60 business days after receipt of an application. All application materials will be treated confidentially.

Upon completion of the review process, individual Review Teams makes a final accreditation recommendation to the ABSNC Board of Directors. Approval from two-thirds of ABSNC Board of Directors is required for accreditation approval.

In order to submit an accreditation application for a certification program for non-RN members of the nursing team, the certifying organization must have an RN and/or APRN certification program currently accredited by ABSNC.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Please note: Paper applications are not accepted. Accreditation applications must be submitted electronically on the [ABSNC LearningBuilder website](https://absnc.learningbuilder.com/) (<https://absnc.learningbuilder.com/>).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

1. From <https://absnc.learningbuilder.com/>, register for a new account using the **A Credentialing Organization** button. The button will turn orange when your cursor moves over it.
 - a. Fill all relevant fields on the Register for an Account page. Required fields are marked with an asterisk (*). Click Submit.

- b. A confirmation code will be sent to the email address entered on the Register for an Account page. Enter this code in the field provided on the Email Confirmation page and click Continue.
2. Click the “My Account” link in the top-right corner of the page. This will take you to your Account Details page.
3. Click either of the orange Add Organization buttons to bring up the Add Organization pop-up window. Enter your Organization Acronym and Main Contact name in their respective fields. Click Continue.
4. From your Account Details page, you now have the option to Add an Assessment-Based Certificate Program, Add an Examination-Based Certification Program, or Add a Portfolio Assessment Certification Program. Select one of these buttons to bring up the Add New Program window.

Add New Program Application

1. Enter the Program Name and Acronym and select a Program Type from the drop-down according to the definitions at the top of the Add New Program window. Click Continue.
2. You will be taken to the Applications page, where you’ll find your new Assessment-Based, Examination-Based, or Portfolio Assessment Certificate Program. Click Begin.
3. You’ll be taken to your ABSNC Accreditation Application. The requirements section at the top of the page tracks your progress through the various tasks of the application; as you complete steps, the progress percentage will increase, and the task counter will increment accordingly.
4. Click the orange Organization Overview button to provide the requested overview of your organization. Click Submit.
 - a. Once you have submitted your response, you can review or edit your response using the three-dot ellipsis button (⋮).



5. Click Provide Overview to bring up the Program Overview window. Add your description and number of certified individuals and click Submit.
6. Click Upload Documents.
 - a. Be sure to review the gray section at the top of the Supporting Documentation window before moving forward.
 - b. You can submit documentation using “Choose from Library” or “Upload”. Use Upload to submit documents from your computer, or Choose from Library to use documents that you’ve previously uploaded to LearningBuilder.
 - c. After you have submitted a document, you can use the trash can icon to remove the submission and choose something else.
 - d. Click the orange Submit button when you have added all your documentation.
7. Click the arrow beside the collapsible heading of any of the application Standards to expand the section. Click the Demonstrate Compliance button to complete each item.



- a. Some items require documentation. If you submit documentation under a Standard, be sure to include descriptions of which pages of the document are relevant in the “Page Number(s) in Document [A, B,...]” text field.
 - b. You can review or edit a submitted compliance response using the three-dot ellipsis button (⋮).
8. Once all standards have been completed and the Requirements progress bar has been filled, you can click the Submit button at the top or bottom of the Application page to submit your application.
 9. Add the Contact Name, Job Title, Address, and Email Address to their respective fields on the Prepare Application pop-up window and click Submit.

Team Review & Inquiries

Each application is assigned a review team who thoroughly reviews the application. ABSNC provides an initial response to the applicant program application within 45 business days from Application Submission once the Application Fee has been received. The review team may either make a recommendation to approve the application or may request additional information as detailed in ABSNC Policy 9.7.

To respond to inquiries:

1. From your Applications page, locate the application with a status of “Application Inquiries”. Click the orange Continue button to its right.
2. Locate and click the orange Clarification Requested button in your application, complete any comments in service of the inquiry in the window that pops up, and click re-submit to submit your response.

Once your application has been reviewed and all inquiries have been responded to, the team will make a recommendation and send an email containing your results.

ACCREDITATION PERIOD

ABSNC accreditation is granted for a period of 5 years, beginning with the date of approval. Providing no major changes have been made to the accredited certification program, accreditation must be renewed annually by submitting the Annual Compliance Report and paying appropriate fees. Annual reports must be submitted to ABSNC to confirm continuing compliance with Standards.

Organizations must seek reaccreditation every 5 years. Renewal notices are circulated to organizations with accredited programs 24, 18, and 12 months before the accreditation expiration date. Applications must be

submitted no later than 6 months before the expiration date to allow time for review before accreditation expires. Expiration occurs on the first of the month.

RECOGNITION OF ACCREDITATION

Upon approval of accreditation or re-accreditation, an organization's certification program is recognized with a framed certificate and listing on the ABSNC website www.absnc.org.

Organizations with accredited programs are encouraged to communicate this achievement on their websites and on all publications. ABSNC logo art will be provided in conjunction with the recognition process.

APPEAL OF ACCREDITATION DECISIONS

In instances in which accreditation is not awarded, the applicant organization will be advised of specific reasons for the denial of accreditation. A copy of the ABSNC "Reconsideration and Appeal of Accreditation Decision" policy and procedure will accompany notice of denial of accreditation or reaccreditation.

FEES

Application Fee

A non-refundable application fee (check payable to "ABSNC") must be submitted in association with the application and cover sheet. Applications submitted without the application fee will not be processed until the application fee is received.

ABNS Regular Member organizations benefit from reduced accreditation application fees. The application fee for organizations with no approved programs is \$1000 per certification program submitted. The fee for ABNS members is \$750 for 1 certification program and \$1000 for 2 – 5 certification programs. Multiple certification programs must be submitted at the same time to obtain the reduced fees.

Annual Renewal Fees

Upon notification of approval of initial accreditation, the applicant organization will pay annual accreditation fees within 60 days of receipt of notification of approval. These fees are prorated based on the quarter in which the application is approved. An invoice will be sent to the organization by the ABSNC office.

Annual renewal fees are based on a formula using candidate numbers as of June 30 each year. Annual renewal fees are due to ABSNC by August 1 of each year.

For organizations submitting an application for reaccreditation, fees are paid annually as noted on the annual invoice sent by the ABSNC office.

ACCREDITATION OF JOINTLY OWNED CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

ABSNC accepts applications for accreditation of certification programs jointly owned by more than one nursing certification organization. In the case of jointly owned certification programs:

- ALL accreditation standards apply to all owners.
- ALL policies and procedures adopted for the management of the program must be adopted and implemented by all owners.
- ALL owners must submit copies of policies and procedures that govern their individual functions as requested in the standards (e.g., public member; autonomy from the member organization in terms of governance, finance and certification program management).
- A copy of the agreement between owners must be provided as part of the accreditation application. Information related to financial impact may be redacted if desired by the organization.

Checklist for Submission of Accreditation Application

- ✓ Confirmed use of the most current Accreditation Standards found on the ABSNC website, www.absnc.org.
- ✓ An Organization account in LearningBuilder to submit program applications.
- ✓ Issued a check payable to "ABSNC" for the appropriate application fee.