



**New Practitioners
Forum**

***Board Certification Guide:
Tips and Tricks for Registering, Preparing, and
Recertification***

Board Certification Guide: Tips and Tricks for Registering, Preparing, and Recertification

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Compiled by the New Practitioners Forum Resident Advancement Advisory Group
June 2024

For questions regarding this document, please contact newpractitioners@ashp.org
For similar resources, visit the [ASHP New Practitioner Resources webpage](#)

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Why Pursue Board Certification

There are numerous reasons to pursue board certification as a pharmacist. Board certification through the [Board of Pharmacy Specialties](#) (BPS) is a recognizable, highly-esteemed qualification that distinguishes excellence in specialty pharmacy practice. Achieving board certification establishes that the pharmacist is highly qualified in the specialty area of practice. The rigorous standards and recertification requirements ensure this certification yields the most competent pharmacists in the profession with the ever-evolving practice environment. Obtaining board certification distinguishes the pharmacist's knowledge to employers, colleagues, patients, and members of the healthcare team. Board-certified pharmacists can use their advanced knowledge to provide excellent patient care in their specialty.

Additional reasons why board certification could be useful in your practice journey:

- Career advancement
- Increased job opportunities
- Demonstrates competence and commitment to continued learning within your specialty area
- Personal satisfaction and confidence
- Structured CE activities

Available Board Certifications

Specialty Board Certifications available as of January 2024 include:

- BCACP: Ambulatory Care Pharmacy
- BCCP: Cardiology Pharmacy
- BCSCP: Compounded Sterile Preparations Pharmacy
- BCCCP: Critical Care Pharmacy
- BCEMP: Emergency Medicine Pharmacy
- BCGP: Geriatric Pharmacy
- BCIDP: Infectious Diseases Pharmacy
- BCNP: Nuclear Pharmacy
- BCNSP: Nutrition Support Pharmacy
- BCOP: Oncology Pharmacy
- BCPPS: Pediatric Pharmacy
- BCPS: Pharmacotherapy
- BCPP: Psychiatric Pharmacy
- BCTXP: Solid Organ Transplantation Pharmacy

Upcoming Specialty Board Certifications:

- Pain Management Pharmacy

Requirements to Sit for Board Certification

Eligibility requirements for board certification may vary based on the specialty - be sure to confirm requirements on the [BPS website](#).

Generally, requirements are as follows:

- Graduation from a pharmacy program accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) or a program outside the U.S. that qualifies the individual to practice in the jurisdiction.
- A current, active license/registration to practice pharmacy in the U.S. or another jurisdiction.
- Demonstration of practice experience in one of three ways:
 - At least four years of practice experience within the specialty area after licensure/registration as a pharmacist within the past seven years, with at least 50% of time spent in the scope defined by the exam content outline; or
 - Successful completion of a PGY1 pharmacy residency within the past seven years, plus at least two years of practice experience within the specialty area after licensure/registration as a pharmacist with at least 50% of time spent in the scope defined by the exam content outline; or
 - Successful completion of a PGY2 pharmacy residency in the specialty area within the past seven years.
 - **EXCEPTIONS:** Nuclear pharmacy, compounded sterile preparations pharmacy, nutrition support pharmacy, and pharmacotherapy have some different requirements. Check out the [BPS website](#) for further information.
- Check out the [BPS website](#) for additional requirements for applicants outside of the US.

Application Process

- When applying for board certification, be sure to review the BPS "[Candidate's Guide for Certification](#)". This guide includes information regarding the certification application process, managing your examination appointment, preparing for the examination, what to expect on the day of examination and after the day of examination.

Step 1: The first step in the application process is to know when you can apply. Previously all specialties participated in windowed testing in which tests could only be taken during established date ranges. BPS is now transitioning some specialties to continuous testing in which candidates can apply anytime and sit for an exam within 1 year.

- For specialties conducted via windowed testing, there are generally windows in the spring and in the fall. The BPS website will have information regarding when the application period is for these testing windows. It is during these periods that you can apply to take the exam.
- Check the [BPS website](#) for the most up to date information on testing windows

Step 2: So you're eligible to apply to take the exam. You will need some documentation ready to submit during the application process. These include items like your pharmacist license(s), residency completion certificate(s), diploma(s), and/or a letter verifying the practice experience claimed on the application, signed by the supervisor and on official letterhead if applying based on years of experience in the practice area. Residency completion and practice experience provided for eligibility must have a completion date within the last 7 years.

Step 3: Once you're ready to apply, first you'll create a MyBPS profile on the BPS website. Click on the "Apply for New Certification" link to start the application. An application fee is required for first-time applicants. Candidates who have failed a certification examination within the past 12 months have the option to apply to retake the examination for a reduced fee. Once completed, the application will be reviewed by BPS and the decision will be communicated to the applicant within 30 calendar days. In addition to an approval email, applicants will receive an Authorization to Test (ATT) with a link to schedule the exam.

Study Resources for Board Certification Preparation

ASHP offers a variety of [board certification and recertification resources](#) including a Preparatory Review Course and Practice Exam.

- Check out the Certification Resources available at the [ASHP Store](#)













ASHP also offers the [Review & Recertification Reward Program \(RRRP\)](#) for the following specialties: Ambulatory Care Pharmacy, Critical Care Pharmacy, Geriatric Pharmacy, Pediatric Pharmacy, and Pharmacotherapy. The RRRP includes free access to exam preparation material plus enrollment in a recertification plan billed monthly (\$10) during the initial recertification cycle. The plan offers more than the required recertification hours needed for each specialty and compared to other programs, will save you about \$1200 over your first recertification cycle.

Table 1. Types of Available ASHP Study Resources

Resource	What's Included
Pharmacy-Specialty Review Course	Case-based presentations for application to real-life scenarios. The presentations include practice questions that are different than those on the Practice Exam. The course is designed based on the domains, tasks, and knowledge statements developed by the BPS for the certification examination.
Workbook	Provides a broad and detailed update for knowledge of chosen specialty area. Filled with patient cases and practice-based self-assessment questions. The workbook is delivered via your Web browser and Acrobat PDF.
Practice Exam	Compilation of at least 100 practice questions based on content discussed in the Review Course. Take the practice exam as many times as you wish. Answer key may be printed after submitting your answers. Answer key includes correct answers with corresponding rationales, reference sources, and domains, subdomains, and knowledge statements.

Table 2. Available ASHP Study Resources by Specialty

Specialty	Available ASHP Study Resources		
	Review Course, Workbook Chapters, and Practice Exam Package	Review Course Workbook Only	Review Course Practice Exam Only
Ambulatory Care (BCACP)	✓	✓	✓
Cardiology (BCCP)	✓	✓	✓
Critical Care (BCCCP)	✓	✓ <i>Beginning in Sept. 2025</i>	✓
Emergency Medicine (BCEMP)	✓	✗	✓
Geriatric (BCGP)	✓	✗	✓
Infectious Diseases (BCIDP)	✓	✗	✓

Oncology (BCOP)	 <i>*Review Course and Workbook Chapter package available; Practice questions only included in course presentations. Not a separate product.</i>		
Pediatrics (BCPPS)	 <i>Does not include a workbook</i>		
Pharmacotherapy (BCPS)	 <i>Does not include a workbook</i>		
Transplant (BCTXP)	 <i>Workbook sold separately</i>		

- Check out [ASHP's Board Certification Resources](#) page for additional information on Board Certification Preparation Resources for your specialty
- If your specialty isn't listed above, check out the below resources for additional board preparation resource options:
 - [ASHP's Board Certification Resources page](#)
 - Table 3 in the Recertification section for specialty specific organizations that may provide preparation resources
- Additional statistics tips:
 - The ASHP Review Courses and Workbooks include a learning activity for statistics review
 - Consider reviewing additional materials to feel confident in statistic related calculations and research fundamentals
- Discuss with your current workplace if they provide financial assistance with any of the ASHP preparation materials or other available study and practice question resources.
- BPS provides [sample examination items](#) to provide candidates with an opportunity to review the format of the items used on the BPS specialty certification exams.
***Note** these sample examination items are used strictly for the purpose of exam content format and not indicative of actual content on the examinations

Creating a Study Timeline

The decision of when to start studying as well as how much to study is a highly individualized process that requires consideration of various factors. Whether you are a current PGY1 resident or a practicing pharmacist with years of experience, the best study timeline is one that is both realistic for your lifestyle as well as thorough enough to ensure a passing score on your first attempt. Regardless of where you are starting from, the first step is to design a study plan that will work for you!

I. Considerations when designing a study plan

- A. Consider your current knowledge base
 - 1. Are you a current or freshly graduated PGY1 resident who has just spent the better part of a year researching and creating topic discussions?
 - 2. Are you a practicing pharmacist that provides comprehensive medication management in your specialty area?
 - 3. Or are you somewhere in between, with a foundational knowledge base but in need of some general refreshers?
- B. How much time do you have to devote to studying for the exam?
 - 1. Do you have a hard deadline by when you need to take the exam?
 - 2. Is your specialty exam offered continuously or during a testing window?
 - a) If during a testing window, when are the offered dates for your exam?
 - b) Is the next upcoming test window too soon? Or would waiting for the next test window be too long to wait?
- C. What other factors might impact your study timeline?
 - 1. PGY1 residency, while extremely informative, may not allow for much extra study time to cover those topics not covered in your rotations
 - 2. PGY2 residency may be equally, if not busier than PGY1 and may take away from studying for more general topics that are not part of your PGY2 program
 - 3. Life factors such as weddings, vacations, family events, birthdays, or any other significant life event might take up a significant portion of your free time

II. General tips and tricks

- A. Start by reviewing the content outline provided on the BPS website that's specific to your specialty examination
 - 1. This includes the content outline and notes the percentage of items allocated to each content area
 - 2. BPS Examination Content Outline for each specialty can be found [here](#)
- B. Identify what resources you want to use early on so you can incorporate them into your study plan accordingly
 - 1. ASHP offers full review courses which include online lectures and practice exams (*availability varies by specialty certification - Refer to*

Table 2 in the Study Resources for Board Certification Preparation section)

- C. Plan to spend extra time on areas you are least familiar with
 - 1. Statistics is one commonly cited section test takers wish they had spent more time reviewing prior to taking the test regardless of length of time since graduating or completing residency
 - 2. Depending on how much time you give yourself and your familiarity with general topics, you may decide to either study only what you are least familiar with or study everything and give extra review time to those topics you are least familiar with
- D. Plan to build in extra time at the end of each topic to account for procrastination, life events, and other unforeseen delays
- E. Be honest with yourself, know how likely you are to procrastinate and plan accordingly
- F. Consider asking friends and coworkers who have taken the exam for advice on how they prepared and developed a study plan
- G. Identify a study partner or study group and hold weekly discussions. Group accountability is key!
- H. If you learn best in person, ASHP offers a [live Pharmacotherapy Review Course](#) each December on the Saturday/Sunday at the beginning of the Midyear Clinical Meeting and Exhibition.

III. Specific tips and tricks

- A. Current PGY1 resident
 - 1. Plan far in advance to spread out studying longitudinally throughout the year, aligning BCPS topics with your clinical rotations and topic discussions
 - 2. Be sure to include plenty of extra time to account for a busy residency schedule to ensure you don't fall too far behind
 - 3. After graduation consider mainly focusing on topics not covered by your clinical rotations and/or topic discussions
- B. Current PGY2 resident
 - 1. Work closely with your program director to determine if taking the BCPS exam during this year is feasible or not
 - 2. If you decide to take the BCPS exam during PGY2, try to do so early in the year before getting too busy with other longitudinal projects and clinical rotations
 - 3. If studying for your PGY2 specialty exam, refer to tips and tricks for current PGY1 resident
- C. Fresh residency graduate
 - 1. Dedicate more study time to topics you did not cover during your clinical rotations and/or topic discussions
 - 2. If it has been more than a few months since you graduated, you may consider a light refresher on more general topics with more emphasis on those topics not covered during residency
 - a) Consider using tests banks as a refresher on topics you are already familiar with

- D. New Practitioner
 - 1. If sufficient time has passed since completion of residency, consider doing a light refresher on more general topics with more emphasis on those topics not covered during residency
 - a) Consider using test banks as a refresher on topics you are already familiar with
 - 2. Consider your daily practice and what topics you have strengthened through work experience vs those you have not encountered during residency or maybe never encountered and plan to spend extra time studying the latter
- E. Practicing pharmacist
 - 1. Consider the areas of practice you deal with on a daily basis and are extremely familiar with vs those you have not encountered in a long time, or possibly never encountered
 - 2. Consider doing a full review based on BPS content outlines
 - 3. Plan ahead and give yourself ample time to review before the testing window opens

Recertification

Specialty Board Recertification

Once an individual passes the initial board certification exam, the length of the certification is 7 years. BPS then requires all pharmacists who hold any specialty board certifications to apply for recertification which will continue to occur on a 7-year cycle as long as the certificant wishes to maintain their specialty credentials. Recertification ensures credential holders have completed the educational requirements (CPE vs. examination) needed to maintain the competencies required to provide the safest and most evidenced based care within their specialty area.

- I. **Important Dates** (as of January 2024 – confirm dates on the [BPS website](#))
 - A. **January of recertification year:** recertification application is available on BPS website
 - B. **July 1:** annual board certification fee is due; failure to pay by this date results in certification status change from “active” to “activity pending”
 - C. **August 26:** recertification application deadline
 - NOTE:* If recertifying by CPE, the application can be submitted prior to completion of the required CPE.
 - NOTE:* if recertifying by exam, the application for recertification must be submitted within the recertification year in order to register for the exam.
 - D. **October 15:** deadline to sit for the recertification exam in order to receive an examination score by December 31
 - E. **December 31:** if recertification requirements have not been met during the credential holder’s certification year, the certificant will be removed from the “Find a Board Certified Pharmacist” directory within the BPS website.
 - NOTE:* A one-time extension can be granted for an additional year at the discretion of BPS.

Candidates who become board certified and recertified must wait until the following calendar year to begin accumulating CPE hours for recertification.

II. Methods of Recertification

A. Professional Development / Continuing Pharmacy Education (CPE)

1. *Certification cycle beginning January 1, 2023 and earlier:*
 - a) Requires 100 units of assessed CPE from BPS-approved professional development programs.
 - b) All required CPE must be completed by December 31 of the recertification year.
 - (1) EXCEPTIONS
 - (a) Pharmacotherapy: requires 120 hours of assessed CPE from BPS-approved professionals development programs.
2. *Certification cycle beginning January 1, 2024 and later:*
 - a) Requires 100 total units composed of...
 - (1) 80 units of assessed CPE from BPS approved professional development programs
 - (2) PLUS an additional 20 units of continuing professional development (CPD) self-reported in MyBPS
 - b) To maintain an active certification in good standing, at least 2 units of BPS-approved CPE or self-reported CPD AND the annual reflection and plan (ARP) must be completed annually.
 - c) All required CPE/CPD must be completed by December 31 of the recertification year.

Table 3. CPE Providers by Board Certification Specialty

Board Certification	BPS approved professional development program (PDP) providers for CPE
Ambulatory Care Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists (ASHP) in collaboration with the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP)
Cardiology Pharmacy	
Critical Care Pharmacy	
Solid Organ Transplantation Pharmacy	
Compounded Sterile Preparations Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacist (ASHP) • American Pharmacists Association (APhA)

Emergency Medicine Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists (ASHP) in collaboration with the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP)
Geriatric Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists (ASHP) in collaboration with the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP) in collaboration with the American Pharmacists Association (APhA)
Infectious Disease Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists (ASHP) in collaboration with the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) Society of Infectious Disease Pharmacists (SIDP)
Nuclear Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purdue University
Nutrition Support Pharmacy	
Oncology Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists (ASHP) in collaboration with the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association (HOPA)
Pediatric Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists (ASHP) in collaboration with the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) Pediatric Pharmacy Association (PPA)
Pharmacotherapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists (ASHP) American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP)
Psychiatric Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists (AAPP)

B. Examination

1. *Certification cycle beginning January 1, 2023 and earlier:*
 - a) Obtain a passing score on the recertification exam by the end of the 7-year recertification cycle.
2. *Certification cycle beginning January 1, 2024 and later:*
 - a) To maintain an active certification in good standing, at least 2 units of BPS-approved CPE or self-reported CPD AND an annual reflection plan (ARP) must be completed annually.
 - b) Certificants will not be able to apply or sit for their recertification exam until 20 units CPD and 7 ARPs are completed.
 - c) Once the application for recertification is approved, when certificants are able to sit for their exam are specialty specific

depending on if the exams are offered in a windowed or continuous cycle.

- d) Candidates must achieve a passing score by December 31 of their recertification year.

III. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

- A. 20 units of CPD are required per recertification cycle regardless of chosen recertification process (i.e. examination vs. professional development)
- B. BPS will award CPD for recertification purposes only. The necessary Reflect, Plan, and Evaluate components must be completed for CPD units to be awarded.
 1. REFLECT: assessment of learning needs and goals
 2. PLAN: outcome-based learning, objectives, priorities, and timeline
 3. LEARN: activities, resources, and various learning methodologies are identified and utilized to meet the learning objectives
 4. EVALUATE: learning objectives outcomes and impact are evaluated
 5. APPLY: connect learning to practice
- C. Examples of CPD sources include BPS approved CPE, teaching and precepting learners, scholarly activities, and professional service. For details on sources of CPD and maximum units per recertification cycle, visit the [BPS website](#).
- D. How to Self-Report CPD Activities
 1. myBPS → recertification → report activity → add activity record → log details of CPD activity

IV. Annual Reflection and Plan (ARP)

- A. Must be recorded in MyBPS annually regardless of the recertification pathway. ARP may be completed at any point during the year, although best practice is to complete your reflection and plan prior to documenting CPD activities
- B. How to Self-Report ARP
 1. MyBPS → recertification → report activity → add activity record → annual reflection and plan submission → complete required fields → save

V. Recertification Tools

- A. [ASHP 3-Year Recertification Plans](#)
- B. [ASHP Review and Recertification Reward Program](#)
- C. [BPS Recertification Overview](#)

Additional Resources

- [ASHP Board Certification Resources](#)
- [Roadmap to Pursuing Pharmacist Board Certification Webinar](#)
- [A Primer on Pharmacist Board Certification Podcast](#)