

CCNS RENEWAL

Acute/Critical Care Clinical Nurse Specialist (Adult, Pediatric & Neonatal)

Staff Review: August 2023
Board Approved: March 2024
Last Revised: March 2024

1.0 POLICY

Renewal Eligibility

Current, unencumbered U.S.¹ RN or APRN license that was not subjected to formal discipline by the Board of Nursing in the state(s) in which you practiced and had no provisions or conditions that limited your nursing practice during the 5-year certification renewal period.

- Provisions or conditions may include, but are not limited to, direct supervision of practice, drug administration limitations and/or practice area exclusions.
- Documentation of all provisions and conditions from the Board or its designee must be reviewed prior to approval for renewal.
- Certificants must notify AACN Certification Corporation (Cert Corp) within 30 days if any provisions or conditions are placed on their RN or APRN license(s).

An APRN whose license has provisions or conditions that limit their practice may be eligible for Conditional Certification. Refer to the Conditional Certification policy for additional information.

The name and address of a supervisor or professional colleague who can verify eligibility must be provided. The verifier need not be CCNS-certified.

AACN Cert Corp may adopt additional eligibility requirements at its sole discretion. Any such requirements will be designed to establish, for purposes of CCNS certification, the adequacy of a candidate's knowledge and experience in caring for the acutely and/or critically ill.

Renewal Options

The CCNS certification period is five (5) years.

Eligible candidates for CCNS renewal must meet the eligibility requirements described in the Renewal Eligibility section of this policy and also meet one of the renewal options below. Certificants may not apply for more than one renewal option.

Late or retroactive renewal is not available for CCNS certification. To maintain a current CCNS certification, renewal must be completed prior to the certification expiration date.

CCNSs may seek certification renewal via one of the following options:

Option 1 - Renewal by Practice Hours and CE Points - In the current renewal period, work a minimum of 1,000 practice hours and complete 150 CE Renewal Points, 75 of which must be in Category I – Acute/Critical Care Education Programs and 25 of which must be Pharmacology CE.

Option 2 - Renewal by Practice Hours and Renewal Exam - In the current renewal period, work a minimum of 1,000 practice hours and apply for, take and pass the CCNS exam for the appropriate age-related population (adult, pediatric or neonatal) before the certification expiration date. *It is not permissible to take the exam early and then attempt to renew by CE Points if the exam is failed.*

Option 3 - Renewal by CE Points and Renewal Exam - In the current renewal period, complete 150 CE Renewal Points, 75 of which must be in Category I – Acute/Critical Care Education Programs (25 must be by Pharmacology CE), and apply for, take and pass the certification exam for the appropriate age-related population (adult, pediatric or neonatal) before the certification expiration date.

Practice Hour Requirements (Options 1 and 2)

- CCNS renewal by practice hours requires active involvement in the care of acutely/critically ill patients as an APRN in all roles of the clinical nurse specialist for 1,000 hours during the 5-year certification period prior to the expiration date.
- Eligible hours are those spent caring for the patient population (adult, pediatric or neonatal) in which certification is held. Hours spent by faculty members supervising the acute/critical care clinical practice of APRN students may be counted toward the practice hour requirement for CCNS renewal.
- Eligible practice hours for CCNS renewal are those completed within the U.S.. Practice hours outside the U.S. may qualify; determination will be made upon review by the Internal Review Panel.

Renewal Exam (Options 2 and 3)

- Candidates must apply for, take and pass the CCNS renewal exam for the appropriate age-related population **before** their certification expiration date. Certificants who do not pass the renewal exam must complete up to 15 CEs focused in their lowest score area(s). These CEs must be completed *after* the renewal exam date and *before* the certification expiration date in order to successfully renew.
- Certificants must obtain CEs in content categories with a score under 70%, as follows:

	Passing	Score Range	CEs	Score Range	CEs	Score Range	CEs
CCNS Renewal Adult	62	57-61	5	52-56	10	below 52	15
CCNS Renewal Ped	62	57-61	5	52-56	10	below 52	15
CCNS Renewal Neo	65	60-64	5	55-59	10	below 55	15

CE Renewal Points Requirements (Options 1 and 3)

Category I – Acute/Critical Care Education Programs

At least 75 of the 150 required CE Renewal Points must be in this category. All 150 CE Points may be in this category.

A. Formally Approved Programs

This area encompasses acute/critical care programs granting approved continuing education credit(s) such as CE, CME, ACPE and academic credit courses. Continuing Medical Education (CME) may account for no more than 50% of the total points in Category I.

Acceptable programs must possess one of the following characteristics:

- Have direct application to meeting the care needs of the adult, pediatric or neonatal patient population.
- Address clinical knowledge, skills and experience utilized by CNSs.

Twenty-five **(25)** of the 75 CE Renewal Points in Category I must be Pharmacology CE.

- Pharmacology content must be at the advanced practice level and related to the APRN's licensed advanced role and population focus.
- If audited, submit CE certificate that lists the number of approved Pharmacology CE/hours.

These programs need NOT be approved by the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses and may be offered by hospitals, professional associations or independent education groups. Home study or self-study programs from professional journals and other sources that grant contact hours apply to Category I.

If an academic credit course specific to patient care of acutely and/or critically ill patients is completed, CE can be awarded in Category I. For academic credit courses, one (1) credit is worth 15 CEs. For example, a 3-credit course would be worth 45 CEs.

Eligible courses include, but are not limited to:

- Physical assessment
- Anatomy/physiology/pathophysiology
- Diagnostic tests used in acute and critical care settings (e.g., ABG, x-ray and lab interpretation)
- Concerns regarding the acute or critical care environment (e.g., infection control)
- Psychological or behavioral responses of the patient and family (e.g., sensory deprivation, patient teaching, nursing diagnosis)
- Issues pertaining to the patient care environment (e.g., ethical and legal issues)
- Therapies, interventions or knowledge vital to patient management (e.g., fluid dynamics, BLS, ACLS, PALS, NRP, nutritional support, pain management, IV therapy, pharmacology)
- Applied clinical research

B. Continuing Education Programs Not Formally Approved

Includes AACN chapter programs, hospital in-services, workshops, study modules, etc. May only account for no more than 25 CE Points in Category I.

Category II - Optional Activities

Optional Activities may account for no more than 75 of the 150 required CE Points. Optional activities are not required.

Professional Publications

Encompasses professional nursing publications. Responsibility in the publication may be authorship, co-authorship or editorial. The item to be published may be a book, chapter in a book, paper, article, abstract, book reviews, etc. Professionally authored multimedia aids are acceptable (points for joint authorships are determined by dividing the number of points to be awarded by the number of authors).

Number of CE Points Awarded

Editorial in a journal	5
Column in a journal	10
Article in a local newsletter or AACN Chapter newsletter	2
Original research article (peer reviewed)	30
Textbook or chapter editor	1 point/10 pages (max 30)
Textbook or chapter author	2 points/10 pages (max 50)
Professionally authored multimedia aids	15
Journal article (peer reviewed)	20
Journal reviewer (article or book chapter)	5
Book review	3
Service on editorial board	5 points per board per year
Clinical blog	2 (max 4 points per year)
Master's thesis/final project	30
DNP capstone/final project	35
Doctoral dissertation/final project	45

Professional Presentations

Encompasses the certificant's participation as an instructor delivering content related to the adult, pediatric or neonatal patient population to nurses, other healthcare professionals or the public. Refer to the *CCNS Test Plan* for acceptable topics. The presentation must be delivered within a structured framework of teaching/learning.

A presentation includes a seminar, in-service, clinical conference, patient/family education program, consumer education program, AACN chapter educational activities, podcast and/or presenting an original paper or poster. The participation may be as a primary instructor, member of a team, guest lecturer, panel participant, etc. No credit is given for repeat presentations of the same content - **3** points per hour of lecture given (max **9** points per year).

If the program is co-taught, the number of points to be awarded is determined by dividing points by the number of instructors.

NOTE: Activities regularly completed as the focus of employment may not be counted. For example, if you regularly teach in your hospital's orientation program, you may not count those presentations; however, you may count presentations given on a newly researched topic for NTI or for your chapter, etc.

Preceptorship or Volunteer Activities

Participating in activities/teams/committees that solve or prevent complex problems or improve care, across multiple departments, settings, facilities or regions such as spearheading a major patient care improvement; and leading an interdisciplinary team to solve a problem - **10** points per year.

NOTE: Activities regularly completed as the focus of employment may not be counted. For example, as one of your hospital's clinical nurse specialists, if you are automatically assigned to the rapid response team, you may not count this participation.

Participation in leadership responsibilities or committee involvement on a chapter/regional level - **30** points per committee, per year.

Leadership responsibilities or committee involvement in professional, governmental or health related organizations - **30** points per committee, per year.

Preceptorship/mentorship – A minimum of 80 hours per year of preceptorship activity must be obtained in order for points to be granted - **10** points per year.

NOTE: Activities regularly completed as the focus of employment may not be counted. If you are precepting an APRN student from a graduate program and are not faculty in that program, you may count those hours. You may not count hours spent precepting or teaching undergraduate students.

2.0 PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

CCNS certification helps maintain an up-to-date knowledge base of acute and critical care nursing. In addition to providing a sense of professional pride and achievement, certification reinforces the special knowledge and experience required for acute and critical care nursing. The purpose of certification renewal is to support continued competence. The CCNS renewal period is five years.

In the Model Nurse Practice Act and Administrative Rules and Regulations, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing makes no recommendations regarding the frequency of advanced practice nursing license renewal or methods to measure or enhance continued competence. Most state boards of nursing have established advanced practice licensure renewal periods of two to three years with minimums of one year and maximums of five years.

Because the field of acute and critical care nursing is so dynamic, and new, often experimental technologies are introduced rapidly, yet the patient population is highly vulnerable, it is of highest importance to validate that the certificant is remaining current with practice changes and advances in therapeutic modalities.

Regarding the anticipated changes in practice in the next five years, the areas cited most frequently related to: more technology, increase in new/inexperienced RNs, sicker/more acute patients, worsening nurse shortage, greater demands and responsibilities, and more focus on evidence-based practice/research. In order to fulfill their role to protect the public, the Board determined that an assessment of the certificant's efforts to maintain, reinforce and enhance their knowledge of acute and/or critical care nursing should be performed no less than every five years.

Another consideration in establishing the five-year renewal cycle is verification of RN or APRN licensure. One criterion for CCNS certification is a current, unencumbered RN or APRN license. A five-year renewal period allows for public protection in that it provides the Board with a mechanism to verify every five years that a certificant has had no disciplinary action taken on their RN or APRN license through the renewal honor statement and random audit process.

¹ *APRN practice hours for renewal are accepted from District of Columbia and U.S. territories of Guam, Virgin Islands, American Samoa and Northern Mariana Islands. Puerto Rico is not an NCSBN member and, therefore, not included. The exception would be if a PR facility is a VA, carries Magnet® designation or is Joint Commission International accredited.*