

CCRN EXAM - DIRECT CARE ELIGIBILITY PATHWAY

Acute/Critical Care Nursing (Adult, Pediatric & Neonatal)

Staff Review: August 2023
Board Approved: June 2020
Last Revised: September 2023

1.0 POLICY

Exam Eligibility

Current, unencumbered licensure as an RN or APRN in the U.S.¹ is required. An unencumbered license is not currently being subjected to formal discipline by the Board of Nursing in the state(s) in which the applicant is practicing and has no provisions or conditions that limit the nurse's practice.²

- 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 testing.
- Candidates and CCRN 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).

Candidates must have met one of the following clinical practice requirement options:

- Practice as an RN or APRN for 1,750 hours in direct care of acutely/critically ill patients during the previous 2 years, with 875 of those hours accrued in the most recent year preceding application.
- or**
- Practice as an RN or APRN for at least 5 years with a minimum of 2,000 hours in direct care of acutely/critically ill patients, with 144 of those hours accrued in the most recent year preceding application.

Eligible hours are those spent caring for the patient population (adult, pediatric or neonatal) of the exam for which the candidate is applying. A majority of the total practice hours and those within the year prior to application for CCRN exam eligibility must focus on *critically* ill patients.

Orientation hours spent shadowing/working with another nurse who is the one with the patient assignment cannot be counted toward clinical hours for CCRN eligibility; however, orientation hours during which you are the assigned nurse providing direct care to acutely/critically ill patients may be counted.

Practice hours for CCRN exam eligibility must be completed in a U.S.-based³ or Canada-based facility or in a facility determined to be comparable to the U.S. standard of acute/critical care nursing practice, as evidenced by Magnet[®] designation or Joint Commission International accreditation. Practice hours outside the U.S. may qualify; determination will be made upon review by the Internal Review Panel.⁴

Nurses serving as manager, educator (in-service or academic), APRN or preceptor may apply their hours spent supervising nursing students or nurses at the bedside. Nurses in these roles must be actively involved in caring for patients at the bedside; for example, demonstrating how to measure pulmonary artery pressures or supervising a new employee or student nurse performing a procedure.

2.0 PROCEDURES

The name and contact information of a professional associate must be given for verification of eligibility. If a certificant is selected for audit, this associate may be contacted to verify that the candidate met the practice hour requirement. A professional associate is defined as a clinical supervisor or a professional associate (RN or physician) with whom the certificant works.

Applicants may request a review of their certification eligibility at any time. The review process will be conducted by the staff of AACN Cert Corp. The appeal process is conducted by the AACN Cert Corp Appeals Panel. Applicants determined to be ineligible for the CCRN exam will have their application fee refunded within 30 days of determination.

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

3.0 PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

CCRN certification is a specialty certification for nurses who provide care to or influence the care of acutely/critically ill adult, pediatric or neonatal patients.

The CCRN exam is based on a study of practice, also known as a job analysis. The job analysis, conducted at least every five years, validates the knowledge, skills and abilities required for safe and effective practice as an RN or APRN who provides care to or influences the care of acutely/critically ill patients in one of the following patient populations: adult, pediatric or neonatal.

The test plan, which provides an outline of exam content, is developed by an expert CCRN panel based on the results of the study of practice. The organizing framework for all AACN Cert Corp exams is the AACN Synergy Model for Patient Care™.

Clinical practice requirements have been validated by subject matter experts. The required hours of clinical practice correspond to the third stage of competence in Benner's Stages of

Clinical Competence. CCRN certification denotes to the public those practitioners who possess a distinct and clearly defined body of knowledge called acute/critical care nursing.

¹ *Includes 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.*

² *If a restriction (temporary or permanent) is placed on an RN or APRN license for an incident that occurred prior to obtaining the license, AACN Certification Corporation (AACN Cert Corp) will evaluate such an occurrence on a case-by-case basis to determine if exam eligibility requirements are met.*

³ *Includes District of Columbia and U.S. territories of Guam, Virgin Islands, American Samoa and Northern Mariana Islands. Puerto Rico (PR) 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.*

⁴ *The Internal Review Panel has determined that Australia practice aligns with U.S. practice.*