

PCCN EXAM - DIRECT CARE ELIGIBILITY PATHWAY

Progressive Care Nursing

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 PCCN 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).

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 ill **adult** 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 ill **adult** patients, with 144 of those hours accrued in the most recent year preceding application.

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

Nurses serving as manager, educator (in-service or academic), APRN or preceptor may apply their hours spent supervising nursing students or nurses performing direct care. Nurses in these roles must be actively involved in direct care of patients; for example, performing a procedure or supervising a new employee or student nurse performing a procedure.

Practice hours for PCCN 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 progressive 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

2.0 PROCEDURES

The name and contact information of a professional associate must be given for verification of eligibility related to practice hours. A professional associate is defined as a supervisor or a colleague (RN or physician) with whom the candidate works.

If a certificant is selected for audit, they will be asked to provide a statement about how their practice influences patients, nurses and/or organizations to have a positive impact on acutely ill patients and families. The verifier will need to validate in writing that the candidate worked the required number of practice hours and that the practice aligns with the statement provided by the certificant.

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 PCCN 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 PCCN certification, the adequacy of a candidate's knowledge and experience in caring for acutely ill adult patients.

3.0 PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

PCCN certification denotes to the public those practitioners who possess a distinct and clearly defined body of knowledge called acute/critical care nursing. PCCN is a specialty certification for nurses who provide care to or influence the care of acutely ill adult patients who are moderately stable with an elevated risk of instability, regardless of their physical location. Nurses eligible for this certification may work in areas such as intermediate care, direct observation, step-down, telemetry and transitional care units

The PCCN 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 delivered to acutely ill adult patients.

The test plan, which provides an outline of exam content, is developed by an expert PCCN panel based on the results of the study of practice and approved by the AACN Certification Corporation Board of Directors. Eligible practice hours are those which align with the test plan caring for the appropriate patient population.

The organizing framework for all AACN Cert Corp exams is the AACN Synergy Model for Patient Care which is based on Benner's Stages of Clinical Competence.

The number of clinical practice hours required for eligibility are validated by subject matter experts with each study of practice and approved by the AACN Certification Corporation Board of Directors.

An unencumbered U.S. license as RN or APRN is required to validate that nurse is following accepted legal nursing practice in compliance with State Board of Nursing requirements.

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.*