

PCCN EXAM - KNOWLEDGE PROFESSIONAL ELIGIBILITY PATHWAY

Acute Care Knowledge Professional, Adult

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-certified nurses 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 meet the following practice requirements:

- Practice as an RN or APRN for 1,040 hours during the previous 2 years, with 260 of those hours accrued in the most recent year preceding application is required. **Eligible practice hours include those in which the nurse applies knowledge in a way that influences patients, nurses and/or organizations to have a positive impact on the care delivered to acutely ill patients and families.**

Eligible practice hours may be a combination of role practice/non-direct care and direct care focused on the adult population. A majority of the total practice hours and those within the year prior to application for CCRN-K exam eligibility must focus on *acutely* ill patients.

Practice hours for the PCCN exam and renewal 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.

Nurses eligible for the PCCN exam - Knowledge Professional pathway **may** work in roles such as those listed below. This is not an all-inclusive list, nor does it mean all nurses working in these roles are eligible.

- Clinical or Patient Educator
- Academic Faculty
- Manager/Supervisor
- Nursing Administrator
- Case Manager
- Transitional Care Coordinator

Nurses who primarily or exclusively provide direct care (e.g. bedside/staff nurses, ACNPs) to acutely ill adults should refer to the PCCN Exam Handbook - Direct Care Eligibility Pathway.

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 in care of the acutely ill.

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 direct care to or influences the care delivered to acutely ill patients. The acutely ill patients would be the adult patient population.

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 is approved by the AACN Certification Corporation Board of Directors.

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.

Clinical practice requirements have been validated by subject matter experts and are approved by the AACN Certification Corporation Board of Directors. The required hours of clinical practice correspond to the third state of competence in Benner's Stages of Clinical Competence. PCCN

certification denotes to the public those practitioners who possess a distinct and clearly defined body of knowledge called progressive care nursing.

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.*