1.0 POLICY

Exam Eligibility

Current, unencumbered licensure as an RN or APRN the U.S.\(^1\) is required. An unencumbered license is not currently being subjected to formal discipline by any state board of nursing and has no provisions or conditions that limit the nurse’s practice in any way\(^2\). It is the responsibility of exam candidates and CCRN-certified nurses to notify AACN Certification Corporation (Cert Corp) within 30 days if any restriction is placed on their RN or APRN license(s). This applies to all RN or APRN licenses currently held.

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.

---

\(^1\) 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 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.
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.

Practice hours for CCRN exam eligibility must be completed in a U.S.-based 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

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 (need not be CCRN-certified).

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 denotes to the public those practitioners who possess a distinct and clearly defined body of knowledge called acute/critical care nursing. CCRN is a specialty certification for nurses who provide direct care to acutely/critically ill patients regardless of their physical location. The acutely/critically ill populations are one of the following: adults, pediatric or neonatal patients. Nurses eligible for this certification may work in areas such as intensive care units, cardiac care units, combined ICU/CCUs, medical/surgical ICUs, trauma units or critical care transport/flight.

---

3 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. The exception would be if a PR facility is a VA, carries a Magnet® designation or is Joint Commission International accredited.

4 The Internal Review Panel has determined that Australia practice aligns with U.S. practice.
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 in direct care of acutely/critically ill patients. The acutely/critically ill patients would be one of the following patient populations: adult, pediatric or neonatal.

The test plan is based on the results of the study of practice and is developed by an expert CCRN/CCRN-E/CCRN-K panel and approved by the Certification 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 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.