



Board for  
Certification of  
Nutrition  
Specialists

# BCNS Certifications

# Handbook 2026-2027

Contact Us

General Questions and Application Submissions:

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## **Introduction**

The *Certifications Handbook* provides information essential to the certification process from application through examination and recertification for the CNS®, CKNS<sup>SM</sup>, CNGS<sup>SM</sup>, and CPNP<sup>SM</sup>.

### **About the Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists<sup>SM</sup>**

The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists (BCNS) was established in 1993. The purpose of the BCNS is to serve the public by establishing and enforcing standards for certification, recertification, and the Code of Ethics, and by issuing credentials to individuals who meet these standards.

Certification programs offered by the BCNS are developed and administered in compliance with nationally accepted accreditation standards for certification programs.

The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists is responsible for establishing, reviewing, and overseeing the implementation of the policies for the certification programs. The BCNS has the sole authority to establish policies for certification eligibility, development and scoring of the examinations, administration of the examinations, recertification requirements, and operations of the certification program.

### **BCNS Mission**

The BCNS mission is to advance human health through the science and practice of professional Personalized Nutrition (PN) care. Certified Nutrition Specialist professionals are on the front lines using Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) to battle chronic disease and improve health. The BCNS supports these efforts and certifies nutrition professionals that maintain the highest standard of nutrition competence.

### **BCNS Board of Directors**

The BCNS Board of Directors (“Board”) was established to promote the highest standards of professional nutrition care practice through the development, implementation, coordination, and evaluation of all aspects of the certification and recertification processes.

The Board is solely responsible for essential decisions related to the development, administration, and ongoing maintenance of the BCNS certification programs. The Board ensures that all application and eligibility requirements, examination development and administration, recertification requirements, and all certification program requirements and procedures, are directly related to the purpose of the certification programs.

### **BCNS Credentials Council**

The Credentials Council, a sub-committee of the Board of Directors, is responsible for the development of the BCNS eligibility requirements and for the evaluation and authorization of all certification applications. All decisions made by the Board of Directors are final.

## **Consultants**

BCNS contracts with independent psychometric consultants to assist in the development, administration, scoring, score reporting, and analysis of the Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) certification program.

## **BCNS Examination Development Council**

Each certification has an independent Exam Development Council. The examination development councils' responsibilities are cyclical and include the development of content, review of content relevancy, and evaluation of performance data and expertise with the establishment of the passing standard for the examination.

## **BCNS Examination Development Process**

### **CNS Certification Examination**

The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists ensures the validity, reliability, and legal defensibility of the Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) certification program. The examination is an assessment instrument that measures the competency of potential candidates against a body of knowledge, skills, and abilities designed to demonstrate the depth of knowledge appropriate for effective practice in the PN profession.

The content of the CNS examination is based on the outcomes of a job analysis study. A job analysis is a comprehensive definition of the tasks performed by professionals currently holding the CNS credential. The purpose of the job analysis is to describe, in specific terms, the precise nature of the tasks performed by incumbent professionals who work in the field of nutrition for which the examination is being developed. Job analyses are conducted every 5-7 years, or more often as circumstances may warrant, in order to verify the content of the examination. The results of the job analysis influence to what extent the competencies are revised for the CNS certification examination.

The CNS examination is based on an explicit set of competencies determined by the job analysis study conducted on practitioners. The competencies are grouped into domains, subdomains, and tasks. As the CNS examination may only assess knowledge pertaining to these competency statements, they serve as the outline or blueprint for the examination. The content outline is published on the ANA website.

The examination specifications are established or revised at the same time as the development of the examination blueprint. The specifications include the total number of test items, test item type(s), total test duration, and scoring methodology. The examination blueprint and

specifications are based on the outcome of the job analysis study and are reviewed and approved by a panel of subject matter experts.

All examination items (or questions) are directly linked to the approved examination specifications and are written and reviewed by a panel of trained subject matter experts that hold the CNS certification. The examination development council, working with the psychometric consultant, regularly reviews items, and approves the examinations.

### **CKNS, CNGS and CPN-P Certification Examination**

The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists ensures the validity, reliability, and legal defensibility of these certification programs. The examinations are an assessment instrument that measures the competency of potential candidates against a body of knowledge, skills, and abilities designed to demonstrate the depth of knowledge appropriate for effective practice in the PN profession.

All examination items (or questions) are directly linked to the approved examination specifications and are written and reviewed by panels of trained subject matter experts. The examination development council regularly reviews items and approves the examinations.

### **About the Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) Credential**

#### **Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS)**

The CNS designation demonstrates to colleagues, clients, employers, and the public at large that certified individuals have the knowledge and proficiency required of the professional PN practice. BCNS<sup>SM</sup> has established qualifying pathways for nutritionists and other advanced-degree health professionals including MDs, DOs, DCs, NDs, PAs, PharmDs, RDs, and RDNs who wish to demonstrate competence as advanced clinical PN professionals and/or obtain a potential pathway to state licensure for nutrition practice and MINT. The CNS is formal recognition for nutrition professionals who have met rigorous and demanding eligibility requirements, including postgraduate education, subsequent supervised practice in professional nutrition and demonstration of a depth and breadth of knowledge appropriate for effective practice in the profession of personalized nutrition.

### **Eligibility Requirements for Nutritionists and Health Professionals**

BCNS has developed requirements for eligibility to ensure that the application process is fair and impartial for all applicants. Each eligibility requirement has been established to ensure that individuals certified by BCNS have an acceptable level of knowledge and proficiency needed to provide nutrition care services at a mastery level. In establishing these requirements, the Board acknowledges that a combination of both work experience and demonstrated knowledge are

essential for individuals earning the CNS credential.

Candidates cannot earn certification without passing the certification examination. Eligibility requirements will be published in the candidate handbook and will be readily available to applicants.

To be eligible to sit for the CNS examination, CNS candidates must fulfill both the academic and educational requirements as outlined below:

### **Examination Eligibility Criteria**

All academic and educational requirements outlined within the following criteria must be met before applying to sit for the BCNS examination. Candidates will not be awarded, and may not use, the CNS credential until all program requirements are fulfilled and approved by the BCNS Credentials Council.

To be eligible to sit for the BCNS examination, CNS must fulfill both the academic and educational requirements as outlined below:

#### **Coursework Requirement**

Coursework must be from a United States regionally/institutionally accredited institution recognized by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation or its foreign equivalent; credits are semester credit hours.

The BCNS cannot accept courses taken directly from StraighterLine. Courses are only eligible if they appear on an official transcript from an accredited university through an articulation agreement.

The Academic requirement is a minimum, for-credit coursework of 36 semester credit hours in the following categories.

#### **Graduate nutrition courses | twelve (12) hours of graduate credits**

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Developmental Nutrition
- Metabolism of Vitamins & Minerals
- Micro/Macro Nutrients
- Nutrition Assessment
- Therapeutic Nutrition

#### **Biochemistry | six (6) semester credit hours**

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Biochemistry of nutrition
- Clinical biochemistry

- Medical biochemistry

**Physiology or anatomy/physiology | three (3) semester credit hours**

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Anatomy and physiology I, II
- Anatomy
- Medical physiology
- Physiology
- Health and wellness physiology I

**Clinical or life sciences courses | twelve (12) semester credit hours**

May be prerequisites for the above courses and include but are not limited to:

- Biology
- Botany
- Micro-Biology
- Nutrition Science
- Organic/Inorganic Chemistry

**Graduate or undergraduate behavioral science | three (3) semester credit hours**

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Motivational Interviewing
- Psychology
- Motivational Counseling
- Principles and Practices of Health Behavior and Self-Care
- Foundations of Health Behavior and Health Education

**Degree Requirement**

Master of science or doctoral degree in a field of nutrition or a related field (including, but not limited to Public Health, Health Science, Biochemistry, Nursing, Physician's Assistant) from a United States regionally/institutionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent; or

Doctoral degree in a field of clinical healthcare (including, but not limited to, MD, DO, DC, DDS, Doctor of Nursing, ND, PharmD) from a United States regionally/institutionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent.

\*\*Personalized nutrition is an interdisciplinary field that draws upon a broad range of sciences to advance human health. It considers the unique makeup of individuals and specifically identified sub-groupings of people with similar characteristics, and encompasses a person-centered approach to nutrition science evidence, education and clinical care.

### **Transcript Requirement**

Official school transcripts for coursework and the conferring of the Master of Science or the doctoral degree, or its foreign equivalent, and all mandatory coursework are required.

Applicants must arrange for the submission of the transcripts from the institution(s) directly to the BCNS. Examination eligibility will not be conferred without receipt of official transcripts.

### **License Requirement**

Applicants must provide BCNS proof of their applicable professional license for verification.

### **Curriculum Vitae/Resume Requirement**

Applicants must submit a recent curriculum vitae or resume detailing professional experience as a nutritionist.

### **Letters of Recommendation Requirement**

Applicants must ensure submission of two letters of recommendation from healthcare professionals familiar with their work in the field of nutrition in accordance with the following guidelines:

- On organization/entity letterhead
- Indicate the relationship with the applicant
- Describe the type of work witnessed and performed to provide enough depth to allow the BCNS credentials council insight into the applicant's character, experience, abilities, and commitment to the field of nutrition
- Sent via email to [Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org](mailto:Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org)

### **Fee Requirement**

- Applicants must pay a non-refundable application fee upon submission of exam application materials.
- Upon approval to sit for the exam, applicants must pay the exam fee.
- Late postponement (less than 30 days before exam date) of the exam may result in a penalty fee.
- Applicants are responsible for all fees associated with the test center.

### **Eligibility Rationale**

Each eligibility requirement has been established to ensure that individuals certified by BCNS have an acceptable level of knowledge and skill needed to demonstrate nutrition-specific competency and a commitment to client and patient safety in varied settings.

Applicants are required to pass the examination to demonstrate their education, experience,

and/or training have resulted in sufficient understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to provide safe and competent evidence-based nutrition services as determined by the job analysis studies and represented on the examination detailed outline.

Each eligibility requirement has been selected to support the purpose of the credential:

#### **Education**

Minimal educational requirements have been established for certification eligibility to address the depth and breadth of knowledge and skill required to achieve competency to provide nutrition science services in a safe and effective manner.

#### **Experience**

Minimal supervised practice requirements have been established for certification eligibility to address the depth and breadth of knowledge application and skill required to achieve competent nutrition practice.

#### **Ethics**

BCNS certificants and candidates have the obligation to: maintain high standards of integrity and professional conduct; accept responsibility for their actions; continually seek to enhance their professional capabilities; practice with fairness and honesty; and encourage others to act in a professional manner, consistent with the certification standards and responsibilities set forth in the Code of Ethics. All candidates and certificants are required to agree and adhere to an enforceable Code of Ethics as a condition of certification.

#### **Examination**

Applicants are required to pass the Certification Examinations for Nutrition Specialists to demonstrate that their education, experience, and training have resulted in a mastery of understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to provide safe and competent evidence-based nutrition science services as determined by the job analysis studies and represented on the examination detailed outline.

### **CNS Supervised Practice Experience (SPE) Requirement for Nutritionists and Other Advanced-Degreed Healthcare Professionals**

#### **Supervised Practice Experience Overview**

Supervised Practice Experience (SPE) is a key eligibility requirement for earning the CNS credential, enabling candidates to gain valuable clinical practice experience under the supervision of highly qualified nutrition professionals. The SPE provides the opportunity for candidates to use, develop, and refine knowledge and skill competencies in advanced clinical

nutrition.

Candidates identify supervisor(s) and arrange practice setting(s) in accordance with guidelines and resources provided by BCNS, including the competencies which must be addressed during the 1000-hour experience.

### **Requirements for the Supervised Practice Experience (SPE)**

Essential to being awarded the CNS credential, the CNS candidate must demonstrate evidence of experience in nutrition through the completion and submission of 1,000 hours of supervised practice experience in the following nutrition categories:

- Nutrition assessment (minimum 200 hours)
- Nutrition intervention, education, counseling, or management (minimum 200 hours)
- Nutrition monitoring or evaluation (minimum 200 hours)
- The remaining hours may be in any of the above categories.

### **Eligibility Requirements for CNS® Supervisors as of April 1, 2026**

Supervisors must meet **all** of the following criteria:

#### **1. Credential / Degree Requirements**

Supervisors must hold at least one of the following credentials for a minimum of three years prior to applying:

- Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS), or
- Registered Dietitian with a Master's or Doctoral degree in a nutrition-related field from a regionally accredited institution, or
- Doctorate of Clinical Nutrition from a regionally accredited institution

#### **2. Practice Experience**

- A minimum of 1,500 client-facing hours, excluding SPE hours earned during CNS candidacy

#### **3. Licensure**

- Must hold an LDN/LN license (or equivalent) in any U.S. state

#### **4. Ethical & Professional Requirements**

- Must review the CNS Code of Ethics
- Must agree to the Supervisor Responsibilities and Standards
- May not supervise any individual to whom they are married, related, or in a domestic partnership

#### **5. Capacity**

- Approved supervisors may supervise multiple candidates on an ongoing basis

Supervisors must meet state regulations to practice MNT in their home states and the state in which the candidate's client is located at time of service. Candidates need to be aware of this requirement when deciding on clients to work with.

While the CNS SPE requirements do not maintain that the supervisor and candidate live, work,

or hold a license with nutrition in scope in particular states, candidates should know the state regulations and work with supervisors accordingly.

### **SPE Categories and Hours**

The practice experience should follow the PN Care Model, with time allocated as follows:

- Category A: Personalized Nutrition Assessment and Interpretation (minimum 200 hours)
- Category B: Personalized Nutrition Intervention, Education, Counseling, and Ongoing Care (minimum 200 hours)
- Category C: Personalized Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation (minimum 200 hours)

Remaining hours may be in any of the above categories.

The practice experience should address each of the SPE competencies through exposure to a broad range of health conditions.

#### **Category A: Personalized Nutrition Assessment & Interpretation (min 200 hours required)**

Definition: Nutrition assessment is an ongoing, dynamic process that incorporates a systematic approach to collect, record, and interpret quantitative and qualitative inputs including diet, lifestyle, behavior, symptoms, nutritional genomics, biochemical laboratory markers, and personal and family health history. The nutrition assessment is used to identify existing manifestations of dysfunction as well as the underlying root causes of imbalance which contribute to risk factors and current nutritional health issues to enable effective treatment and prevention strategies and monitor improvements. Be able to competently perform a personalized nutrition assessment incorporating the following quantitative and qualitative inputs:

- Comprehensive medical nutrition health history, including linking symptoms and health status
- Evaluation of laboratory data including identification of optimal value ranges
- Evaluation of functional testing (organic acid, stool, and saliva tests for adrenals and hormones, other)
- Evaluation of hormonal and neurotransmitter imbalances based on laboratory assessment
- Assessment of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs)
- Nutritional inborn errors of metabolism
- Body composition analysis (skin fold, bioelectrical impedance, ultrasound, DEXA, other)
- Anthropometric measurements (BMI, waist-to-hip, waist circumference, other)
- Dietary assessment tools (food records, dietary recalls, food frequency questionnaires, others including computerized analysis of food intake)
- Identification of symptoms that require medical referral
- Correlation of symptoms and lab findings for research and development of personalized Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) protocol

- Use of behavior change strategies such as Motivational Interviewing and Stage of Change theory
- Lifestyle factors which impact nutrient needs and compliance such as exercise, stress, and sleep

**Category B: Personalized Nutrition Interventions, Education, Counseling & Ongoing Care (min 200 hours required)**

Definition: A nutrition intervention consists of planned actions designed to change nutrition related or lifestyle-related behaviors for the purpose of resolving health issues or optimizing health. It may involve any of the following activities: research related to treatment plan, development of medical nutrition therapy interventions, client education, counseling and management of individuals or groups, food preparation instruction, shopping, sustainability practices, and behavioral/motivational counseling. Interventions may include changes to diet; use of targeted nutraceuticals; addressing issues related to lifestyle factors such as movement, sleep, stress management; addressing food related behaviors such as timing of eating, eating environment, fasting, food selection, food storage, and food preparation.

1. Medical Nutrition Therapy Be able to competently formulate actionable medical nutrition therapies and interventions, education, counseling and ongoing care for the prevention, modulation, and management of a broad range of chronic systemic disorders, such as:

- Underweight, overweight, malnutrition, and Obesity
- Cardiometabolic
- Endocrine
- Immune and Autoimmune
- Gastrointestinal Disorders
- Other System Disorders (hematologic disorders, hepatic disorders, pulmonary disorders, renal disorders, cognitive/neurological disorders, mental health and mood disorders, compromised individuals (those undergoing chemotherapy, radiation, surgical procedures, dialysis)

2. Key concepts in nutrition intervention and monitoring Understand, evaluate, and apply knowledge of the following key concepts in the formulation of actionable intervention and monitoring plans:

- Impact of nutrigenomics and nutrigenetics on health
- Drug, herb or nutraceutical action, duration of action, purpose, and dose of a client's current therapeutic regimen
- Nutrient depletions related to commonly used drugs
- Interactions between drugs and foods, alcohol, vitamins, minerals, herbs, phytochemicals, and zoochemicals
- Synergistic effects and antagonistic interactions of nutrients in foods and supplements
- Evaluation of established diets, including appropriate application, effectiveness, and

- contraindications
- Linking childhood behaviors to obesity and other chronic health issues in adults
- Gauging and optimizing client compliance
- Evidence-based dose and duration of nutraceutical use for common conditions
- Good manufacturing practices and other quality markers for nutritional supplements
- Effects of disordered eating patterns on nutrition status, body composition, and body functions
- Application of national guidelines, policies, consensus recommendations, and evidence-based research in the development of personalized therapeutic interventions
- Evidence-based use of common botanical supplements for health promotion and common conditions
- Safety, toxicity, and contraindications for nutraceuticals and botanical supplements
- Consideration of client's personal and cultural beliefs when developing nutrition intervention plans

#### **Category C: Personalized Nutrition Monitoring & Evaluation (min 200 hours required)**

Definition: Regular re-evaluation of medical nutrition therapy treatment and prevention plan and goals in accordance with evaluation of improvements made based on symptoms, overall health status, and quantitative and qualitative data. Includes review of clinical research, standards of care, and other indirect contact. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are crucial to a robust client care, as they enhance personalization of interventions throughout the duration of the care process. Regular assessment of subjective input and collection of objective data enables honing and refinement of therapeutic intervention strategies to build self-efficacy and behavior change in the individual, thereby optimizing quantitative and qualitative measures of an individual's health

#### **SPE Eligibility**

To be eligible, all supervised experience must be gained after the candidate matriculates into the qualifying degree program. However, some state regulations stipulate that supervised practice begins after completion of the qualifying degree program. It is the responsibility of candidates and supervisors to familiarize themselves with the applicable state regulations.

Although the SPE may be completed before or after passing the CNS Certifying Examination, it is important to note that historically those who have completed the practice experience perform better on the examination than those who have not. The CNS credential will not be awarded until the completed SPE hours have been approved by the BCNS Credentials Council.

Effective April 1, 2026: Any candidate who is beginning to earn Supervised Practice Experience (SPE) hours must complete the BCNS SPE Candidate Training and provide their supervisor with a certificate of completion before accruing hours. This requirement applies only to new SPE candidates who have not started earning supervised practice experience hours prior to April 1, 2026. Candidates who have

already begun accruing SPE hours are not required to complete the training, though it is strongly recommended as a supportive resource.

### **Finding Supervisors**

Supervisors can be employers, faculty, colleagues, mentors, etc. Candidates can participate in networking events and activities, research nutrition professionals in their geographic location and area(s) of specialty, utilize the ANA Practitioner Finder and ANA Mentor program (benefit of ANA membership), or contact the BCNS staff ([applications@NutritionSpecialists.org](mailto:applications@NutritionSpecialists.org)) for a list of approved supervisors.

Each supervisor must meet the eligibility requirements and be approved by the BCNS prior to supervising candidates for eligible practice hours.

### **Finding Practice Settings**

Supervised practice experience settings may be any that facilitate the SPE requirements, including but not limited to: BCNS-approved qualifying degree programs, clinical practice, an institutional setting, community setting, home health care setting, etc. (NOTE: Retail stores are not an appropriate setting).

To address the CNS SPE competencies, the 1,000 hours will likely come from multiple settings and supervisors.

While BCNS allows supervision to be done in person, remotely, or in combination, candidates should review guidelines for supervision of the state in which they reside and the state(s) in which they plan to be licensed, if different. An increasing number of states will require that remote supervision includes periodic direct observation of candidate-client interactions whether by viewing a recorded session, by sitting in a live session via teleconference, or on site.

### **Candidate Responsibilities**

It is the candidate's responsibility to

- Complete the BCNS Candidate SPE Training before beginning supervised practice hours and provide the certificate of completion to the supervisor.
- Secure appropriate practice setting(s) and qualified, BCNS-approved supervisor(s) to support a tailored supervised practice experience.
- Review and comply with all applicable licensing statutes and regulations in both the candidate's state and the state where clients are located prior to beginning the SPE.
- Maintain timely, accurate, and complete records throughout the SPE to ensure documentation is sufficient for BCNS review and, if applicable, state licensing board requirements.
- Submit required application materials after completing the minimum of 1,000 supervised practice hours.

- Use the PN Case Data Collection Form, SOAP notes, or ADIME documentation for each client encounter and review all cases with the supervisor(s).
- Meet with supervisors on a regular basis to review and discuss all client cases.
- Clearly disclose to clients that services are being provided under supervision as part of the requirements for earning the CNS credential.
- Maintain student or professional commercial liability insurance for the duration of the supervised practice experience.

Candidates may begin the SPE by observing the actions of experienced nutritionists/supervisors. For this reason, the CNS requirements allow for 250 observational hours counted towards the 1000-hour requirement. As the candidate becomes more experienced, more of the hours will be spent directly with a client or groups of clients or in preparation for client clinical work.

### **Indirect and Direct Experience**

#### **Indirect Experience (optional and maximum of 250 hours)**

Candidates may opt to start with observational hours as they are learning the PN care model and just beginning to apply foundational coursework to clinical situations. During observational SPE, candidates will earn hours across Categories A, B and C in the following ways:

- Listening to videos of client and practitioner interactions and discussing findings with the supervisor;
- Shadowing an experienced clinician in active clinical care, and discussing cases with the supervisor;
- Participating in supervised simulation exercises and/or role playing; and
- Utilizing case studies to analyze clinical cases and prepare treatment plans or handouts that are reviewed by the supervisor.

NOTE: Observational hours are not required, and candidates may earn the complete 1,000 hours in Direct experience.

#### **Direct Experience (minimum of 750 hours)**

While earning direct experience, candidates and supervisors work together to ensure they are each meeting their responsibilities. During direct SPE, candidates will earn hours across Categories A, B and C in the following ways:

- Counseling of individuals and groups;
- Activities directly related to the counseling of active individual clients and groups of clients such as completing chart notes and/or treatment plans, evidence-based research activities directly related to developing treatment plans, and communicating with clients or other members of a client's healthcare team between live sessions;
- Participating in community education including the development and delivery of education to a specific population; and

- Supervisor-led grand rounds and one-on-one meetings covering active client cases.

The following activities do not qualify for SPE hours:

- Research that is not related to a current client
- Writing books, articles, blogs, etc.
- Teaching classes in academic programs
- Developing condition-based training programs and treatment protocols not related to a current client
- Presenting educational lectures, videos, webinars, etc. academics for mass audience (YouTube Videos, Instagram or Facebook Lives, ect.)
- Watching educational lectures, videos, webinars, etc.

### **Tracking hours**

Candidates are required to track hours worked and competencies met with the BCNS provided application documents. It is highly recommended that they track information on a daily or weekly basis to ensure details are not forgotten.

Candidates must also keep detailed descriptions of their client work. This includes a summary of the 1,000 hours of work meeting the rigorous competencies of a nutrition professional, but also self-evaluations in each competency. Candidates should complete all fields with detailed experiences and activities that fulfill each competency to indicate how each has been met.

NOTE: All reports must be complete and are very important for the BCNS to evaluate the candidate's experience.

### **SPE for State Licensing**

BCNS approval of SPE does not guarantee that the candidate will meet the experience requirement that state law mandates. Although CNS SPE requirements meet those of many states, regulations and eligibility requirements vary from state to state and change over time.

Most states individually evaluate the education, examination, and SPE components of each candidate.

It is the responsibility of each candidate to review the current licensing statute and regulations in the state(s) in which they intend to practice before beginning the SPE. This information will ensure the candidate complies with the state's requirements for record-keeping, supervisor qualifications, supervisor-candidate interaction, competencies and skills, practice facilities, etc. BCNS highly recommends candidates obtain a copy of the licensure application ahead of time, from the state(s) in which they intend to be licensed so that they understand the documentation that will be required for licensure. Applications are generally available online,

but in some states, it will be necessary to call the department handling the process to obtain a copy. Please refer to <https://theana.org/advocate>.

### **Supervisor Responsibilities**

It is the supervisor's responsibility to:

- Complete the BCNS Personalized Nutrition SPE pre-recorded training and submit the required attestation.
- Assume professional responsibility for the candidate's work and maintain a system that demonstrates the supervisor has authorized, verified, and directed all work performed under supervision.
- Complete the BCNS Supervisor Approval Application before supervising a candidate. Once approved, submit the one-page Supervisor Application Addendum for each additional candidate.
- Ensure supervision complies with the legal and regulatory requirements of the state where the candidate's clients are located at the time services are provided.
- Work with each candidate to structure a supervised practice experience that meets CNS SPE requirements and competencies, aligns with the candidate's current skill level, and supports their evolving career goals.
- Provide ongoing, active oversight of the candidate's work, including regular, scheduled supervisory meetings.
- Maintain access to all client cases managed by the candidate and review cases at regular intervals.
- Keep documentation of the candidate's work and progress throughout the supervised practice experience.
- Be reasonably available to the candidate during client care. If unavailable for an extended period, designate an approved backup BCNS supervisor.
- Maintain professional liability insurance.
- Evaluate the candidate's performance through direct observation of client interactions, either live (in person or remote) or via recorded sessions, in accordance with state licensing laws.
- Renew BCNS Supervisor status every three years.

Relevant documents:

- [Supervisor's Application](#)
- [Supervisor's Application Addendum](#)
- [Candidate's SPE Report](#)
- [Supervisor's Report](#)

### **Eligibility Requirements for RDs**

BCNS has developed requirements for eligibility to ensure that the application process is fair and impartial for all applicants. Each eligibility requirement has been established to ensure that individuals certified by BCNS have an acceptable level of knowledge and proficiency needed to provide nutrition care services at a mastery level. A combination of education, practice experience, and demonstrated knowledge is essential for individuals earning the CNS credential.

To be eligible to sit for the BCNS examination, CNS candidates must fulfill both the academic and educational requirements as outlined below:

### **Degree Requirement**

Master of Science or doctoral degree in a field of nutrition or a related field (including, but not limited to: Public Health, Health Science, Biochemistry, Nursing, Physician's Assistant, Dietetics) from a United States regionally/institutionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent; or Doctoral degree in a field of clinical healthcare (including, but not limited to DC, DDS, MD, DO, DC, DNP, ND, PharmD) from a United States regionally accredited\* college or university, or its foreign equivalent.

### **Coursework Requirements for RDs**

Coursework must be from a United States regionally/institutionally accredited institution recognized by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation or its foreign equivalent; credits are semester credit hours.

Thirty-six semester credit hours of relevant coursework to provide the foundational knowledge for the development of core competencies required for the practice of effective personalized nutrition\*\* as indicated by the CNS® Examination Content Outline.

The BCNS cannot accept courses taken directly from StraighterLine. Courses are only eligible if they appear on an official transcript from an accredited university through an articulation agreement.

\*\*Personalized nutrition is an interdisciplinary field that draws upon a broad range of sciences to advance human health. It considers the unique makeup of individuals and specifically identified sub-groupings of people with similar characteristics and encompasses a person-centered approach to nutrition science evidence, education, and clinical care.

Graduate Nutrition Science – Twelve (12) semester credit hours

Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Developmental Nutrition

- Metabolism of Vitamins & Minerals
- Micro/Macro Nutrients
- Nutrition Assessment
- Therapeutic Nutrition
- Endocrine System Therapeutics
- Botanical Medicine

Graduate or Undergraduate Biochemistry— Six (6) semester credit hours Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Biochemistry of Nutrition
- Clinical Biochemistry
- Medical Biochemistry

Graduate or Undergraduate Physiology or Anatomy/Physiology – Three (3) semester credit hours

Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Anatomy and Physiology I, II
- Anatomy
- Medical Physiology
- Physiology
- Health and Wellness Physiology I

Graduate or Undergraduate Clinical or Life Sciences – Twelve (12) semester credit hours

Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Biology
- Botany
- Micro-Biology
- Nutrition Science
- Organic/Inorganic Chemistry

Graduate or Undergraduate Behavioral Science – Three (3) semester credit hours Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Motivational Interviewing
- Psychology
- Motivational Counseling
- Principles and Practices of Health Behavior and Self-Care
- Foundations of Health Behavior and Health Education
- Sociology

### **Transcript Requirement**

Official school transcripts for coursework and the conferring of the Master of Science or the doctoral degree, or its foreign equivalent, and all mandatory coursework are required.

Applicants must arrange for the submission of the transcripts from the institution(s) directly to the BCNS. Examination eligibility will not be conferred without receipt of official transcripts.

### **Curriculum Vitae/Resume Requirement**

Applicants must submit a recent curriculum vitae or resume detailing professional experience as a nutritionist.

### **Letters of Recommendation Requirement**

Applicants must ensure submission of two letters of recommendation from healthcare professionals familiar with their work in the field of nutrition in accordance with the following guidelines:

- On organization/entity letterhead
- Indicate the relationship with the applicant
- Describe the type of work witnessed and performed to provide enough depth to allow the BCNs credentials council insight into the applicant's character, experience, abilities and commitment to the field of nutrition
- Sent via email to [Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org](mailto:Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org)

### **Fee Requirement**

Applicants must pay a non-refundable application fee upon submission of exam application materials.

Upon approval to sit for the exam, applicants must pay the exam fee.

Late postponement (less than 30 days before exam date) of the exam may result in a penalty fee.

Applicants are responsible for all fees associated with the test center.

### **Eligibility Rationale**

Each eligibility requirement has been established to ensure that individuals certified by BCNS have an acceptable level of knowledge and skill needed to demonstrate nutrition-specific competency and a commitment to client and patient safety in varied settings.

Applicants are required to pass the examination to demonstrate that their education, experience, and/or training have resulted in sufficient understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to provide safe and competent evidence-based nutrition services as determined by the job analysis studies and represented on the examination detailed outline.

Each eligibility requirement has been selected to support the purpose of the credential:

#### **Education**

Minimal educational requirements have been established for certification eligibility to address the depth and breadth of knowledge and skill required to achieve competency to provide nutrition science services in a safe and effective manner.

#### **Experience**

Minimal supervised practice requirements have been established for certification eligibility to address the depth and breadth of knowledge application and skill required to achieve competent nutrition practice.

#### **Ethics**

BCNS certificants and candidates have the obligation to: maintain high standards of integrity and professional conduct; accept responsibility for their actions; continually seek to enhance their professional capabilities; practice with fairness and honesty; and encourage others to act in a professional manner, consistent with the certification standards and responsibilities set forth in the Code of Ethics. All candidates and certificants are required to agree and adhere to an enforceable Code of Ethics as a condition of certification.

#### **Examination**

Applicants are required to pass the Certification Examinations for Nutrition Specialists to demonstrate that their education, experience, and training have resulted in a mastery of understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to provide safe and competent evidence-based nutrition science services as determined by the job analysis studies and represented on the examination detailed outline.

### **CNS Practice Experience Requirement for RDs**

RD Candidates must complete the following requirements to apply to sit for the examination:

- Submit exam application; and
- Submit documentation of completion of dietetic internship (RD registration will fulfill this requirement); and
- Submit one PN Case Data Collection Form for a case occurring within the past 5 years; and

- Submit 75 Continuing Education credits in personalized nutrition obtained within the past 5 years

## Applying for Certification

Before submitting application materials, carefully review the information contained in this Handbook. The BCNS strictly adheres to its eligibility requirements for certification. It is the responsibility of the applicant to comply with all application procedures and deadlines in order to establish eligibility to take the examination.

When applying for certification be sure to:

- Sign and date the forms using DocuSign or another electronic signature.
- Keep copies for your records.
- Submit the exam application and fees.
- If unable to submit, documents may be sent to [Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org](mailto:Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org) as a secondary option.

### Exam Application

The CNS exam application must be submitted by the deadline date (60 days prior to the exam date) for those applicants seeking eligibility to sit for the CNS examination.

Completion and submission of the CNS exam application and corresponding fee.

Ensure submission, by the school, of official transcripts for coursework and the conferring of the qualifying degree (sent to [Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org](mailto:Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org)).

Submission of proof of applicable professional license for verification.

Submission of recent curriculum vitae or resume.

Ensure submission of two (2) letters of recommendation (sent by the letter writer to [Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org](mailto:Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org)).

Submission of Request for Special Accommodations Form and Documentation of Disability-Related Needs Forms (if applicable).

Candidates will receive approval to sit for the exam by email within 4-6 weeks of completed materials.

Once approved to sit for the exam, candidates will receive an email to register for a local test center, date, and time. A registration fee will be required (payable to the third-party test center).

If necessary, approved applicants may postpone taking the examination for one examination cycle from their scheduled examination date without penalty or additional fees, provided BCNS is notified in writing at least thirty days prior to the scheduled examination. Requests to postpone within 30 days will require a penalty fee.

### **Supervised Practice Experience (SPE) Application Materials**

Before beginning the SPE hours, ensure completion and submission of the Supervisor Approval Application. NOTE: Supervisors must meet the BCNS requirements and be approved by the BCNS. Failure to comply may result in hours not being accepted (sent by the prospective supervisor to [Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org](mailto:Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org)).

- Ensure completion and submission of the Supervisor's Report (submitted by the supervisor to [Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org](mailto:Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org))
- Completion and submission of the Candidate's SPE Report.
- Submission of an updated curriculum vitae or resume.
- Candidates can complete and submit SPE hours and materials up to 5 years after passing the certification exam. If submitted after 5 years, candidates will be required to re-take the exam.

### **Examination Content and Format**

The CNS examination contains 200 multiple-choice, single-answer questions, and will cover the broad spectrum of basic and applied nutritional science. Themes such as fundamental principles on nutrition, nutrients and human health, nutrition assessment, clinical intervention and monitoring, professional issues, epidemiology, biochemistry, and integration of these areas, are threaded throughout the examination. Detailed information may be found within the published Examination Content Outline. Candidates have four hours to complete the examination.

*Please see Appendix A for 2024-2028 CNS Exam Content Outline*

### **Tips for Success**

Read the entire CNS Handbook.

Familiarize yourself with the [CNS Examination Content Outline](#)

Read How to [Prepare for the Certification Examination for Nutrition Specialists](#).

### **Language**

The CNS examination, as well as all communications from the BCNS, will be in English. Translation services and extended time for language challenges are not available.

## **Special Testing Accommodations**

BCNS complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and will provide reasonable and appropriate testing accommodations for candidates with documented disabilities who request and demonstrate the need for accommodation as required by law. BCNS requires verifiable documentation to ensure the individual qualifies under the ADA as a disabled individual, and to allow accommodations to be specifically matched with the identified functional limitation to provide equal access to all testing functions.

The information provided by candidates and any documentation regarding such disability and special accommodation, will be treated with strict confidentiality and will not be shared with any source, with the exception of BCNS authorized testing consultants and proctors, without the candidate's express written permission.

Candidates requiring special accommodations must complete the Special Accommodations Request form, and the Documentation of Disability-Related Needs form before scheduling the examination. These forms must be submitted with the CNS exam application to the BCNS by the deadline posted on the BCNS website.

Requests for accommodations are reviewed by the BCNS to ensure the request can be processed without jeopardizing the integrity or security of the examination. BCNS staff will communicate with the candidate to ensure all processes and procedures are explained and that a testing appointment is scheduled to accommodate their needs accordingly, if feasible.

## **Exam Appeals Process**

When testing irregularities occur, the Certification Department Lead will conduct an investigation to provide information to the Board. Based on this information, the Board may direct either not to score the test or to cancel the test score. When it is appropriate to do so, the Board will give affected test takers the opportunity to take the test again as soon as possible, without charge. Affected test takers will be notified of the reasons for the cancellation and their options for retaking the test. Any appeal process does not apply to testing irregularities.

## **On Examination Day**

### **Testing Sites**

BCNS examinations are administered at ISO-Quality Testing sites located throughout the United States and several countries.

Please refer to the [Iso-Quality Testing, Inc. website](#) for general updates and information. Proctors are

not allowed to answer any questions related to the content of the examination.

Candidates should arrive a minimum of 10 minutes before the testing appointment. Failure to show up for examination at the scheduled time, failure to bring Candidate Admission Letter and lack of proper identifications will result in a forfeit of examination appointment and fees. No food or drink is permitted in the examination room. Personal items, including but not limited to cell phones, car keys, notes, smart watches, jewelry will be stored during the exam per the test center policy. Examination security policy, examination site details, and inclement weather policy will be outlined on the Candidate Admission Letter. Breaks will be allowed during testing, but the examination timer will continue to run. Candidates will be provided one piece of scratch paper for the exam.

### **Identification Requirements**

To be allowed to take the test, candidates must present the following:

- Candidate Admission Letter (from ISO-Quality Testing)
- A valid government-issued ID with signature. The name on your admission letter must match the name on your photo ID.

### **Security**

To ensure the security of the examination, all test materials are confidential. All proprietary rights in the examinations, including copyrights and trade secrets, are held by the BCNS. In order to protect the integrity of the examinations and to ensure the validity of the scores reported, candidates must adhere to strict guidelines regarding proper conduct in handling copyrighted proprietary examinations. Any attempt to reproduce all or part of the examinations, including, but not limited to, removing materials from the examination room, aiding others by any means in reconstructing any portion of the examinations, selling, distributing, receiving or having unauthorized possession of any portion of the examinations, is strictly prohibited by law. Alleged copyright violations will be investigated, and if warranted, prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. All examination scores may be invalidated in the event of suspected breach.

A candidate can be disqualified from taking or continuing to sit for an examination, or from receiving examination results, or the candidate's scores might be cancelled, if through proctor observation, statistical analysis, and other evidence that the candidate's score may not be valid or that the candidate was engaged in collaborative, disruptive, or other unacceptable behavior during the administration of the examination.

### **Test Irregularities**

Occasionally, testing irregularities occur that affect a group of test takers. Such problems

include, without limitation, administrative errors, defective equipment or materials, improper access to test content and/or the unauthorized general availability of test content, as well as other disruptions of test administrations (for example, natural disasters and other emergencies). When testing irregularities occur, the Certification Department Lead will conduct an investigation to provide information to the Board. Based on this information, the Board may direct either not to score the test or to cancel the test score. When it is appropriate to do so, the Board will give affected test takers the opportunity to take the test again as soon as possible, without charge. Affected test takers will be notified of the reasons for the cancellation and their options for retaking the test. Any appeal process does not apply to testing irregularities.

## **After the Examination**

### **Notification of Examination Results**

Score reports are issued via email directly to candidates approximately 4 to 6 weeks after the examination administration. Candidates are encouraged to provide a personal email for score notifications due to privacy. Examination results are not given out by BCNS staff via telephone or fax and results are not released to anyone other than the candidate who took the examination unless written consent is provided by the examinee.

Official score reports will include a pass or fail result, scoring information, and general information regarding administrative next steps.

Diagnostic information is provided on score reports for those candidates who were unsuccessful. Diagnostic breakdowns calculated per domain are intended to identify content areas by showing areas of relative strength and weakness. Information is provided to assist the candidate in identifying areas of study for purposes of subsequent examination.

### **Interpreting Examination Results**

A criterion-referenced standard-setting process is used to establish the passing point for each examination. This means that each candidate's performance on the examination is measured against a predetermined standard. Candidates are not graded on a curve and do not compete against each other or against a quota.

The passing points for the exams are established using a panel of qualified subject matter experts who carefully review each examination item to determine the level of knowledge or skill that is expected. The passing point for each examination is established to identify individuals with an acceptable level of knowledge and skill. Test results are calculated using a scaled score method (100 to 1,000) with a minimum of 600 required to pass.

## **Review of Examination Scores**

Candidates whose examination scores are below the minimum acceptable passing standard may request, via email, a manual review of their examination score. This request and a \$50 regrading fee must be received no later than two months after the test date. A review of examination scores will be processed and emailed approximately two weeks from the receipt of the request. The review of the examination score result is final.

## **Validation of Scores**

BCNS and the independent psychometric consultants reserve the right to cancel scores if their validity and integrity is compromised. Discrepancies such as misconduct of a candidate may cause a score to be suspect. BCNS and the independent psychometric consultants will investigate the occurrence and may cancel or withhold the examination results if a violation of regulations is found.

## **Reexamination**

Candidates who fail the examination may retake the examination. Reexamination requires the completion and submission of the CNS Reexamination Application with the reexamination fee. Candidates must continue to meet the published eligibility criteria.

## **Completion of Program Requirements**

Candidates who pass the BCNS examination must successfully fulfill all CNS program requirements within five years from their testing date. Examination results will expire for those candidates who have not met all program requirements within this five-year period, and reexamination will be required.

## **CNS Program Completion**

The CNS credential is conferred, and program completion is achieved when the candidate has:

- Successfully passed the CNS examination;
- A Master of Science or doctoral degree in the field of nutrition from a United States regionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent; or a doctoral degree in a field of healthcare (including, but not limited to, MD, DO, DC, DDS, Doctor of Nursing, ND, PharmD) from a United States regionally accredited college or university or its foreign equivalent;
- Met all required coursework;
- Completed, documented, and submitted 1000 hours of supervised practice experience;
- Attested that they have never been convicted of, pled guilty, or no contest to a felony, or of any fraud, false statements, or omissions, wrongful taking of property, bribery, perjury, forgery, or a conspiracy to commit any of these offenses;

- Attested to comply with the BCNS Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and continuing education standards as set forth by the Board of Directors; and
- Conformed to all application procedures.

### **Disciplinary and Complaints Policy**

Information regarding the complaint process will be available to the public via the BCNS website or other published documents. A complete copy of this policy will be made available to any individual upon request.

In order to maintain and enhance the credibility of the BCNS certification program, the BCNS Board of Directors has adopted the following procedures to allow individuals to elevate complaints concerning the conduct of a certificant or candidate. In the event a certificant or candidate violates or does not meet the BCNS Code of Ethics, certification rules, requirements, and/or policies, the BCNS may reprimand or suspend the individual, revoke certification, or deny certification.

The grounds for sanctions under these procedures may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Violation of or failure to meet established BCNS Code of Ethics, rules, requirements, and/or policies.
- Conviction of a felony or other crime of moral turpitude under federal or state law in a matter related to the practice of, or qualifications for, nutrition science.
- Gross negligence, willful misconduct, or other unethical conduct in the performance of nutrition services for which the individual has achieved CNS certification.
- Fraud, falsification, or misrepresentation in an initial application or recertification application for certification.
- Falsification of any material information requested by BCNS.
- Misrepresentation of CNS status.
- Cheating on any certification examination.

Actions taken under this policy do not constitute enforcement of the law, although referral to appropriate federal, state, or local government agencies may be made about the conduct of the certificant or candidate in appropriate situations. Individuals initially bringing complaints are not entitled to any relief or damages by virtue of this process, although they will receive notice of the actions taken where appropriate.

### **Complaints**

Complaints may be submitted by any individual or entity. Complaints should be reported to BCNS in writing and should include the name of the person submitting the complaint, the name of the person the complaint is regarding along with other relevant identifying information, a

detailed description of factual allegations supporting the charges, and any relevant supporting documentation. Information submitted during the complaint and investigation process is considered confidential and will be processed in accordance with BCNS' Confidentiality Policy. Inquiries or submissions other than complaints may be reviewed and processed by the BCNS Board or Certification Department Lead Programs at its discretion.

Upon receipt and preliminary review of a complaint involving the certification program, the Certification Department Lead in consultation with the Board Chair may conclude, at their sole discretion, that the submission:

- contains unreliable or insufficient information, or
- is patently frivolous or inconsequential.

In such cases, the Certification Department Lead and Board Chair may determine that the submission does not constitute a valid and actionable complaint that would justify bringing it before the Board for investigation and a determination of whether there has been a violation of substantive requirements of the certification process. If so, the submission is disposed of by notice from the Certification Department Lead to its submitter.

Preliminary review will be conducted within 15 business days of receipt of the complaint.

### **Complaint Review**

For each complaint that the Certification Department Lead concludes is valid and actionable, an investigation is undertaken into its specific facts or circumstances to whatever extent is necessary to clarify, expand, or corroborate the information provided by the submitter.

The Chair appoints a Review Committee, subject to subsequent approval by the Board, of three or more individuals, who may or may not be members of the Board to investigate and make an appropriate determination with respect to each such valid and actionable complaint; the Review Committee may review one or more such complaints as determined by the Board. The Review Committee initially determines whether it is appropriate to review the complaint under these Procedures or whether the matter should be referred to another entity engaged in the administration of law. The timeline for responses and for providing any additional information will be established by the Review Committee. The Review Committee may be assisted in the conduct of its investigation by other members of the Board or by Board and/or BCNS staff or legal counsel. The Board exercises general supervision over all investigations. The certificant or candidate whose conduct is at issue will also be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint. Responses must be submitted within 10 days of receipt by the certificant or candidate.

Both the individual submitting the complaint and the certificant or candidate who is the subject of the investigation (or their employer) may be contacted for additional information with respect to the complaint. The Review Committee, or the Board on its behalf, may at its discretion contact other individuals who may have knowledge of the facts and circumstances

surrounding the complaint.

All investigations and deliberations of the Review Committee and the Board are conducted in confidence, and they are conducted objectively, without any indication of prejudgment. An investigation may be directed toward any aspect of a complaint that is relevant or potentially relevant. Formal hearings are not held, and the parties are not expected to be represented by counsel, although the Review Committee and Board may consult their own counsel.

Members of the Review Committee will be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the activities of the Committee.

### **Determination of Violation**

Upon completion of an investigation, the Review Committee recommends whether the Board should make a determination that there has been a violation of policies or rules. When the Review Committee recommends that the Board find a violation, the Review Committee also recommends imposition of an appropriate sanction. If the Review Committee so recommends, a proposed determination with a proposed sanction is prepared under the supervision of the Chair and is presented by a representative of the Review Committee to the Board along with the record of the Review Committee's investigation.

If the Review Committee recommends against a determination that a violation has occurred, and the Board concurs, the complaint is dismissed with notice to the certificant or candidate, the certificant or candidate's employer (if involved in the investigation), and the individual or entity who submitted the complaint, where appropriate.

The Board reviews the recommendation of the Review Committee based on the record of the investigation. The Board may accept, reject, or modify the Review Committee's recommendation, either with respect to the determination of a violation or the recommended sanction to be imposed. If the Board makes a determination that a violation has occurred, this determination and the imposition of a sanction are communicated by written notice to the certificant or candidate, and to the individual submitting the complaint, where appropriate, if the submitter agrees in advance and in writing to maintain in confidence whatever portion of the information is not made public by the Board.

In certain circumstances, the Board may consider a recommendation from the Review Committee that the certificant or candidate who has violated the certification program policies or rules should be offered an opportunity to submit a written assurance that the conduct in question has been terminated and will not recur. The decision of the Review Committee to make such a recommendation and of the Board to accept it are within their respective discretionary powers. If such an offer is extended, the certificant or candidate at issue must submit the required written assurance within thirty (30) days of receipt of the offer, and the

assurance must be submitted in terms that are acceptable to the Board. If the Board accepts the assurance, notice is given to the certificant or candidate's employer and to the submitter of the complaint, if the submitter agrees in advance and in writing to maintain the information in confidence.

### **Sanctions**

Any of the following sanctions may be imposed by the Board upon a certificant or candidate whom the Board has determined to have violated the policies and rules of its certification program(s), although the sanction applied must reasonably relate to the nature and severity of the violation, focusing on reformation of the conduct of the member and deterrence of similar conduct by others:

- written reprimand to the certificant or candidate;
- suspension of the certificant or candidate for a designated period; or
- termination or denial of the certificant or candidate's credential.

Verification of this information will be made available only after any appeal has either been considered or the appeal period has passed.

A reprimand in the form of a written notice from the Board normally can be sent to a certificant or candidate who has received their first substantiated complaint, depending on circumstances. Suspension can be imposed on a certificant or candidate who has received two substantiated complaints, depending on the circumstances. Termination can be imposed on a certificant or candidate who has received two substantiated complaints within a two (2) year period, or three or more substantiated complaints, depending on circumstances. The Board may at its discretion, however, impose any of the sanctions, if warranted, in specific cases.

Certificants or candidates who have been terminated will have their certification revoked and may not be considered for BCNS certification in the future. If certification is revoked, any and all certificates/diplomas or other materials requested by the Board must be returned promptly to the BCNS.

### **Appeal**

Within thirty (30) days from receipt of notice of a determination by the Board that a certificant or candidate violated the certification program policies and/or rules, the affected certificant or candidate may submit to the Board in writing a request for an appeal.

Upon receipt of a request for appeal, the Board establishes an appellate body consisting of at least three, but not more than five, individuals. This Appeal Committee may review one or more appeals, upon request of the Board. No individual privy to the confidential material submitted to the Board may serve on the Appeal Committee; further, no one with any personal involvement or conflict of interest may serve on the Appeal Committee. Members of the Appeal Committee may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in connection with

the activities of the Committee.

The Appeal Committee may only review whether the determination by the Board of a violation of the certification program policies and/or rules was inappropriate because of:

- material errors of fact, or
- failure of the Review Committee or the Board to conform to published criteria, policies, or procedures.

Only facts and conditions in the material submitted to and considered by the Board for its determination are considered during an appeal. The appeal will not include a hearing or any similar trial-type proceeding. Legal counsel is not expected to participate in the appeal process, unless requested by the appellant and approved by the Board and the Appeal Committee. The Board and Appeal Committee may consult legal counsel.

The Appeal Committee conducts and completes the appeal within ninety (90) days after receipt of the request for an appeal. Written appellate submissions and any reply submissions may be made by authorized representatives of the member and of the Board. Submissions are made according to whatever schedule is reasonably established by the Appeal Committee. The decision of the Appeal Committee either affirms or overrules the determination of the Board but does not address a sanction imposed by the Board. The decision of the Appeal Committee, including a statement of the reasons for the decision, is reported to the Board.

The Appeal Committee decision is binding upon the Board, the certificant or candidate who is subject to the termination, and all other persons.

### **Resignation**

If a certificant or candidate who is the subject of a complaint voluntarily surrenders their certification(s) at any time during the pendency of a complaint under these Procedures, the complaint will be dismissed without any further action by the Review Committee, the Board, or an Appeal Committee. The entire record will be sealed, and the individual may not reapply for certification.

However, the Board reserves the right to communicate the fact and date of resignation, and the general nature of the complaint to a government entity engaged in the administration of law, and to refuse future application for certification by the subject of the complaint. Similarly, in the event of such resignation, the Board will notify both the certificant or candidate's employer and the person or entity who submitted the complaint of the date of resignation and that the complaint has been dismissed.

### **Credential Maintenance - Recertification**

To maintain the CNS credential, certificants must recertify every five (5) years by meeting continuing education requirements, affirming compliance with governing policies and ethical standards, and submitting the required fee. Recertification is required to continue use of the CNS credential.

CNS certificants must complete the following within each five-year recertification cycle:

- Earn a minimum of seventy-five (75) continuing education credits that meet BCNS requirements
- Review and affirm compliance with the CNS Code of Ethics
- Review the CNS Scope of Practice and Recertification Handbook
- Submit required attestations and the recertification fee

## **Attestation and Audit**

Beginning March 1, 2026, recertification is based on an attestation model with audit oversight.

By submitting a recertification application, certificants attest that all requirements have been met and that the information provided is accurate and complete.

Certificants selected for audit must submit requested documentation proof of continuing education credits within the timeframe specified by BCNS. Failure to respond to an audit request or failure to demonstrate compliance may result in denial of recertification or other action in accordance with BCNS policies.

BCNS reserves the right to conduct additional audits for cause when warranted.

## **Qualifying Recertification Activities for all BCNS Certifications**

CEs include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

Category	Description	Notations
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<p><b>#1: Participation as a learner in a professional and structured educational activity that is related to nutrition and nutrition care.</b></p>	<p>Attendance at teaching activities offering continuing education (CE) that are recognized by professional organizations, e.g., medicine, pharmacy, nursing, dietetics, or other health professions organizations and societies. The nutrition-based content of the activity must be equal to or greater than 50%. The number of CE credits is equal to that offered by the sponsor of the activity.</p> <p>Attendance at classes and teaching activities offered in association with nutrition educational opportunities hosted by provider organizations. The number of CE credits will generally be equal to 1 credit per hour of instruction.</p> <p>Nutrition courses at a US regionally accredited college or university. Each semester hour of a course taken for credit is eligible for 15 CE credits (e.g., a 3- credit course is 45 hours of classroom instruction, thus 45 CE credits). Audited courses are eligible for 8 CE credits for each semester hour.</p> <p>Other learning activities approved by the BCNS Credentials Council. The activity must be primarily educational in nature, the presentations of scientific quality, evidence-based, and representative of a balanced discussion of the topic, with nutrition-based content equal to or greater than 50%.</p>	<p>Courses may be taken online or in- person.</p> <p>Training classes and activities with the primary purpose of the promotion of the sale of medical, nutritional, or other products, or that promote certain aspects of nutrition but lack scientific quality (e.g., sound methodology and statistical analysis, lack of objectivity or balance) are not eligible for CE credits.</p> <p>Documentation of CE will consist of the Recording of Earned Continuing Education Credits form found on the website.</p> <p>Certificates of attendance, transcripts, or other evidence of participation may be requested if you are audited or upon request of the Credentials Council.</p>
<p><b>#2: Teaching nutrition courses at a US regionally accredited college or university or foreign equivalent institution.</b></p> <p><i>A Maximum of 50 CE credits can be earned in this category.</i></p>	<p>Such courses are eligible for 1 CE credit per lecture hour. Documentation of eligible teaching will consist of a letter describing the course and the number of lecture hours taught by the submitting CNS.</p>	

<p><b>#3: Authoring or co-authoring books and articles in the field of nutrition.</b></p> <p><b><i>A maximum of 50 CE credits can be earned in this category.</i></b></p>	<p>Advanced level professional book or textbook: 40 CE credits.</p> <p>Professional review article or book chapter that is published in a peer-reviewed journal or in advanced professional book: 10 CE credits</p> <p>Full original research article published in a peer-reviewed journal Primary author: 10 CE credits and Contributing author: 5 CE credits</p> <p>Abstract of a scientific work or case history published in a peer-reviewed journal Primary author: 2 CE credits and Contributing author: 1 CE credit</p> <p>Non-professional publication that is peer reviewed or reviewed by the BCNS Credentials Council and based on rigorous scientific research Primary author: 10 CE credits and Contributing author: 5 CE credits</p>	<p>Books and papers must be published within the 5-year recertification period to which they are applied.</p> <p>Documentation of authorship will consist of the name and title of the publication. The Credentials Council may request a copy of the work in certain cases.</p>
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<b>#4: Editorship</b> <i>A maximum of 30 CE credits can be earned in this category.</i>	Editor-in-chief of a professional nutrition journal: 25 CE credits per annum  Editing an advanced level professional book or textbook: 15 CE credits per annum  Associate editor of a professional nutrition journal: 10 CE credits per annum  Member of editorial Board of a nutrition-related journal: 2 CE credits per annum.  Editor or co-editor of an advanced professional book or graduate level textbook in the field of nutrition: 15 CE credits	Documentation of CE will consist of a letter describing the editorial activity by the submitting CNS.
<b>#5: Participation as a learner in a professional and structured educational activity (not required to have nutrition content).</b> <i>A maximum of 10 CE credits can be earned in this category.</i>	Courses may include content such as behavioral and motivational counseling, professional development, and JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion). <i>NOTE: the same notes and restrictions from category #1 apply to this category.</i>	
<b>#6: Self-Study Books with Exam</b> <i>A maximum of 22 CE credits can be earned in this category.</i>	Books with exam must offer Continuing Medical Education (CME) or other Continuing Education (CE) that are recognized by the ANA and other professional organizations (e.g. nutrition, medicine, pharmacy, nursing, dietetics or other health professions' organizations and societies.)	

## **Limitations**

Credential maintenance is intended to assist practitioners with increasing their skills, knowledge, and competence while also ensuring compliance with the BCNS Code of Ethics. This process does not, however, warrant or guarantee competency, accuracy, or any particular result, but, rather, participation in the process helps demonstrate the practitioner's commitment to providing the highest quality nutrition science services through continuous education and professional development.

The BCNS acknowledges that not all sources or types of continuing professional education contribute equally to professional development. This ensures that certificants participate in quality continuing professional education activities that are relevant to their jobs and professional development.

## **Rationale For Recertification**

To ensure the proficiency of BCNS certified individuals, the Board requires that each certificant participate periodically in continuing education (CE) to refresh existing knowledge and skills, and to acquire knowledge and skills pertaining to new advances as well as state of the art information over the full spectrum of nutrition science and nutrition care.

The five (5) year period established for recertification is based on both the scope of issues that face nutrition care professionals and the Board's belief that new practices, research, and information are introduced in the field with enough frequency that professional development activities should be conducted routinely so that certificants remain current with best practices and emerging knowledge.

## **Annual Fee**

To remain in good standing, a Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) must renew their certification every five (5) years and pay the CNS Annual Fee each year. The CNS Annual Fee is due by December 31 for the upcoming calendar year and must be paid online. A late fee will be assessed for any payment received after the due date.

Failure to pay the CNS Annual Fee by December 31 will result in the certificant's status being changed to Inactive for a maximum period of one (1) year. During this grace period, the certificant may be returned to active status upon payment of the outstanding annual fee and any applicable late fees. If the annual fee remains unpaid after the one-year grace period, the certification will be revoked.

## **Recertification Expiration**

All associated forms, and fee(s) must be submitted no later than the CNS Certificate expiration date. It is recommended that candidates keep a copy of the completed application and associated forms for two (2) years. Recertification is the responsibility of each certificant. The BCNS is not

responsible for notices that fail to reach certificants.

## **Recertification Acceptance**

BCNS will issue a recertification notification and an updated certificate to the certificant once all recertification requirements have been fulfilled. Recertification applications will not be accepted from individuals whose certification has been revoked.

## **Failure to Recertify**

After a period of five (5) years, or one reporting CE cycle in which a certificant fails to maintain the CNS credential, the certificant's status is listed as "Inactive" for a maximum period of one year. A certificant must complete the Intent to Reinstate Application, pay the reinstatement fee, and obtain the required number of CEs in order to reinstate the credential. Candidates recertifying from inactive status must also complete a Recertification Application and remit the corresponding fee.

If the certificant does not comply with the restoration requirements within the maximum period of one (1) year, the Board will revoke the CNS credential. Subsequent to revocation, an individual who wishes to regain active CNS status must meet the eligibility requirements currently applicable for initial certification and retake the examination.

## **Recertification Appeals**

Appeals regarding recertification eligibility or status must be submitted in writing to the Certification Department Lead within thirty (30) calendar days after notification of the adverse decision. The candidate must submit the appeal in writing (email is acceptable) and explain in detail: 1) The nature of the request and the specific facts and circumstances supporting the request, and 2) all reasons why the action or decision should be changed or modified. The candidate must also provide accurate copies of all supporting documents. The Certification Department Lead will review the appeal within fifteen (15) days. If the issue can be resolved at the staff level, the Certification Department Lead will make a determination and will notify the BCNS Board of the result.

If the issue cannot be resolved by the Certification Department Lead, they will refer the appeal to the Board. The appeal will also be referred to the Board if the candidate does not accept a determination by the Certification Department Lead.

Within thirty (30) days, the Board will appoint an ad hoc Appeals Committee to review the appeal. The committee will review the appeal and make a determination within thirty (30) days. A decision issued by the Appeals Committee may be appealed to and heard by the full Board of Directors. The decision of the Board of Directors is final.

## **Retired Status**

A CNS credential holder in good standing might want to relinquish their active status due to retirement. To apply for retired status, the candidate must:

- Be a current CNS in good standing
- Have renewed the CNS at least once
- Be fully retired and no longer earn primary income from practicing nutrition science.

To apply for a retired status, the candidate needs to submit the Emeritus CNS application. Retired credential holders do not need to report continuing education. Retired credential holders must use the “Certified Nutrition Specialist-Emeritus” or “CNS-E” designation. The discounted annual emeritus fee of \$25 is required and due by December 31<sup>st</sup> for the upcoming year.

Individuals granted CNS-E status may use the CNS-E or Certified Nutrition Specialist-Emeritus after their name, in correspondence, publications, speaking engagements, and other public mentions to indicate their status as a Certified Nutrition Specialist at the time of their retirement from nutrition science. CNS-E designees may not use the CNS designation without the Emeritus suffix and may not portray themselves as a current CNS.

## **Reactivation to CNS Status**

Individuals who become CNS-E have the following options to reactivate their CNS:

If the application for CNS reactivation is made within three (3) years of the last date of being a CNS in good standing, the individual may submit the required number of continuing education units in the preceding three (3) years to reactive the CNS under the recertification policy.

If more than three (3) years has passed since the last date of being a CNS in good standing, or the requirements to reinstate are not met, the individual must meet current eligibility requirements, submit a qualifying application and fees, and achieve a passing examination score.

## **Miscellaneous Certification Policies**

### **Intellectual Property**

All examination materials are the sole property of the BCNS. Examinations are securely administered to candidates for the sole purpose of testing a qualified candidate in a single discipline for which an application for certification has been made.

## **Use of CNS Certification Mark**

After receiving official notification of the CNS designation, the credential may be used as long as certification remains valid and in good standing. Individuals may not use the CNS credential until they have received specific written notification that they have successfully completed all requirements, including passing the examination and documenting the specified experience.

Certificants must comply with all recertification requirements to maintain use of the credential. Certification is a non-transferable, revocable, limited, non-exclusive license to use the certification designation “Certified Nutrition Specialist” subject to compliance with the policies and procedures, as may be revised from time to time.

## **Proper Use of CNS Credentials**

After meeting all eligibility requirements and passing the examination, individuals may use their credential(s) in all correspondence and professional relations. The certification mark(s) may be used only as long as certification is valid.

Individuals who have met the certification standards established by the Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists (“BCNS”) are authorized to use the following certification mark in communications and marketing materials:

### **CNS or Certified Nutrition Specialist**

The rules set forth below have been developed to assist certificants in featuring the mark in print, multimedia, and online communications including business cards, letterhead, advertising, presentation materials, personal promotional literature, signage, and websites. The CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® and CNS® mark may only be used as described below.

The CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® or CNS® certification is not the equivalent of an educational degree, a professional designation, or a title. Instead, the mark represents that a certificant has met the standards required by the BCNS, including completing the education and examination requirements. A certificant therefore entitled to use the CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® and CNS® mark in conjunction with their name to demonstrate this accomplishment, so long as you abide by the rules outlined below.

### **Rules for Proper Usage of the CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® Mark**

1. The CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® and CNS® mark may not be altered or changed.
2. The CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® and CNS® mark must be clearly associated with the individual(s) certified by the BCNS.

#### Correct Use:

John Doe is a CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® certificant  
John Doe, CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® certificant or  
Johns Doe, CNS®

#### Misuse:

ABC employs three CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® professionals; ABC employs three CNS® professionals

3. The CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® and CNS® mark should not be used as a plural or possessive noun.

Correct Use:

John and Jane Doe are CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® certificants.

Misuse:

John and Jane Doe are CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALISTS or CNSs; The CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST'S seminar was sold out.

4. The CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® mark should either be CAPITALIZED completely, used with “Initial Caps” with quotes, or at the very least, with Initial Caps

Correct Use:

John Doe is a CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® professional John Doe is a “Certified Nutrition Specialist” ® professional John Doe is a Certified Nutrition Specialist® professional

Misuse:

John Doe is a certified nutrition specialist® professional

5. The ® symbol should always be used immediately after CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST and CNS® to indicate trademark status. Once the mark has registered, the ® symbol may be used in lieu of the ® designations.

Correct Use:

CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST®

CNS®

6. The CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® mark should always be followed by a noun, such as professional, practitioner, certificant, certification, etc. The mark cannot be used in a way that it appears to be part of an individual's title or degree. It must always be used in connection with services provided by the individual who is entitled to use the mark.

Correct Use:

John Doe is a CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® certificant / professional / practitioner

Misuse:

John Doe is a CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST®.

7. When using the CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® and CNS® trademark in sentences, in addition to following it with a generic noun, the trademark portion of the words should be set off in a different font or stylization (i.e., bold or italics)

8. CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® certificants shall use the following tagline when featuring the CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® mark on websites, in advertisements and on promotional materials:

*The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists (“BCNS”) owns the certification mark CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® in the United States, which it awards to individuals who successfully complete the initial and ongoing certification requirements established by the BCNS.*

9. CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® certificants may not own or use an e-mail address or internet domain name that includes the CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® or CNS® mark.

Correct Use: <http://www.janedoenutrition.com> [janedoenutrition@hotmail.com](mailto:janedoenutrition@hotmail.com)

Incorrect Use: <http://www.janedoecertifiednutritionspecialist.com>;  
[jdcertifiednutritionspecialist@hotmail.com](mailto:jdcertifiednutritionspecialist@hotmail.com); [jdCNS@gmail.com](mailto:jdCNS@gmail.com)

10. CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® certificants shall not use the CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® or CNS® mark in connection with Google’s AdWords Program, keywords, metatags, or any other programmatic devices or tools designed to cause Internet users to visit a particular site or sites or to otherwise direct, steer or channel Internet traffic.

## **Ownership of the Mark and Logo**

The certification mark and logo are the property of the BCNS. Permission to use the certification mark or logo is granted to credentialed persons at the discretion of the Board of Directors, for permissible uses only.

## **Confidentiality Procedures**

The BCNS is committed to protecting confidential and/or proprietary information related to applicants, candidates, certificants, and the examination development, maintenance, and administration process. The confidentiality policy applies to all BCNS employees, Board members, committee members, consultants, psychometric consultants, and other individuals who are permitted access to confidential information.

Confidential materials include but are not limited to, an individual’s application status, personal applicant /certificant information, exam development documentation (including job analysis study reports, technical reports, and cut score studies), examination items, examination forms, and individual examination scores.

To ensure the security of the examination, all test materials are confidential and will not be released to any person or agency, except as required by these policies for the purpose of examination development and administration.

## **Release Of Information**

Information about a candidate/certificant will only be released to that candidate/certificant unless the release of the information is authorized in writing by the individual or is required by law. Personal information submitted by applicants/certificants with an application or recertification

application, including the results of any background check, is considered confidential. Personal information retained within the applicant /certificant database will be kept confidential.

All application information is confidential and will not be shared with any party other than BCNS' examination development or administration vendors for certification processing purposes.

Examination scores are only released to the examination candidate as required by law unless a signed release is provided in writing by the candidate or the candidate consents to a score release through the application process.

Board members will not disclose confidential information related to or discussed during Board meetings unless authorized by the Chair. This includes any verbal or written information identified as a confidential matter.

## **Certification Verification**

The BCNS certification staff maintains a database of all active applicants and certificants. The names and credentials of BCNS-certified individuals and their certification status are not considered confidential and may be published by BCNS for verification purposes. Written verification of credentialed status may be obtained by providing the certificant name via email to the BCNS certification staff. Only the certification status may be shared. No other data may be shared without written permission from the credentialed practitioner.

Verification of certification status will include the certificant's name, current certification status, and credential(s). The names of certified individuals are not considered confidential and may be published by the BCNS.

Application status, information about whether or not an individual has taken the examination, and score information will not be released to those requesting verification and are treated as provided in the BCNS Confidentiality Policy.

## **Code of Ethics**

### **Preamble**

The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists (BCNS) is a nonprofit credentialing board for nutrition specialists. The Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) is formal recognition for nutrition care professionals who have met rigorous and demanding eligibility requirements, including postgraduate education, subsequent supervised practice in professional nutrition, and demonstration of a depth and breadth of knowledge appropriate for effective practice in the profession of nutrition.

The ethical obligations of the nutrition science professional include a commitment to continuous growth and development, professionalism across disciplines, and the highest standards of patient/client nutrition care. This serves to clarify to current and future certificants, and to those served by certificants, the nature of the ethical responsibilities held in common by its certificants. All individuals certified by the Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists are required to adhere to the Code of Ethics.

### **Purpose of the Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists Code of Ethics**

The nutrition science professional has an obligation to demonstrate actions that reflect values, ethical principles, and ethical guidelines. The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists (BCNS) Code of Ethics sets forth these values and principles to guide conduct. It clarifies the social contract that dictates the profession's responsibilities to the patient/client, the public, and the profession; and upholds the fundamental principle that the paramount purpose of the nutrition professional's services shall be to benefit the patient/client.

### **Code of Ethics, Principles, and Interpretative Guidelines**

The following ethical principles are based on the core values of the Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists and apply to all BCNS certificants. Guidelines included for each ethical principle are a non-exhaustive list of behaviors and situations that can help to clarify the principle. They are not meant to be a comprehensive list of all situations that can occur.

A CNS and CNS Candidate agree to adhere to the following Code of Ethics, Principles, and Interpretative Guidelines:

- Foremost, do no harm. A CNS consciously avoids harmful actions or omissions, embodies high ethical standards, and adheres to all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations in the choices he or she makes.
- A CNS places service and the health and welfare of persons before self-interest and conducts oneself in the practice of the profession so as to bring honor to oneself, peers, and to the nutrition science profession.
- A CNS respects and understands that he or she is a health care professional dedicated to providing competent and scientifically sound nutritional and other appropriate care within their own scope of practice, with compassion and respect for human dignity and rights.
- A CNS employs their best good faith efforts to provide unbiased information and facilitate understanding to enable the patient/client to make informed choices in regard to all recommended plans of care or assessment. The patient/ client should make their own determination on such recommendations and assessment. A CNS shall not mislead patients into false or unjustified expectations of favorable results of treatment.
- A CNS upholds the standards of professionalism and is honest in all professional interactions. A nutrition science professional will additionally be knowledgeable about established policies and procedures for handling concerns about unethical behavior. These include policies and

procedures created by BCNS, licensing and regulatory bodies, employers, supervisors, agencies, and other professional organizations (see BCNS Disciplinary and Complaint Policy).

- A CNS upholds the standards of professionalism and commits to performing their duties competently, safely, and ethically. Drug and alcohol abuse will not be tolerated by the BCNS. Any person discovered using alcohol or drugs in a professional practice would be subject to discipline, including certification revocation. (See BCNS Disciplinary and Complaint Policy.)
- A CNS respects the rights of patients, clients, colleagues, and other health professionals, and safeguards patient/client confidence, trust, and privacy in accordance with the law. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, being familiar with and carrying out all HIPAA compliance requirements.
- A CNS commits to the study, application, and advancement of scientific knowledge, continues to seek nutritional and related health education, makes relevant nutrition science information available to patients/clients, colleagues, and the public, obtains consultation, and recognizes the talents of other health professionals when indicated, referring patients/clients to appropriate healthcare providers when their care requires services outside the scope of practice of a CNS.
- A CNS values their responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community and the betterment of public health.
- A CNS truthfully and accurately states one's credentials, professional education, and experiences. CNS may be used as a postnominal credential. The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists does not recognize "board-eligible," and such nomenclature is to be avoided.

A CNS and CNS Candidate agree to adhere to the following Code of Conduct:

- A CNS should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment. A CNS should inform clients when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take reasonable steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes the clients' interests primary and protects clients' interests to the greatest extent possible. In some cases, protecting clients' interests may require termination of the professional relationship with proper referral of the client.
- A CNS should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.
- A CNS should not engage in dual or multiple relationships with clients or former clients in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, A CNS should take steps to protect clients and are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. (Dual or multiple relationships occur when a CNS relates to clients in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, or business. Dual or multiple relationships can occur simultaneously or consecutively.)
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## About the Certified Ketogenic Nutrition Specialist® (CKNS®) Credential

The Certified Ketogenic Nutrition Specialist (CKNS) certification helps identify you as a trained professional in the Ketogenic Diet. The first step to earning this credential is successfully completing the Advanced Ketogenic Nutrition Program offered by the American Nutrition Association (ANA).

### CKNS Credential Eligibility Criteria

There are three eligibility requirements to earn the CKNS: Education, Experience, and Examination. The fee for CKNS certification is \$250.

#### 1. Education

##### Degree and training requirements

**Degree Requirement:** The candidate must hold one of the following:

- Master's of Science degree in the field of nutrition or dietetics from a United States regionally/institutionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent; or
- Doctoral degree in the field of nutrition, dietetics, related health science or medicine, from a United States regionally/institutionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent; or

**Training Requirement:** All candidates must have completed all six modules of the American Nutrition Association (ANA) Ketogenic Nutrition Training program. Please do not apply to sit for the exam until you have completed the training program.

#### 2. Examination

The candidate must achieve a passing score of 75% or higher on the Certification Examination for Ketogenic Nutrition Specialists. The exam is offered online on an ongoing basis.

The Certification Examination for Ketogenic Nutrition Specialists is designed to test the knowledge and skills acquired by those who have successfully completed the educational requirements outlined above. The examination contains 60 multiple-choice, single-answer questions. Candidates have 90 minutes to complete the exam with no exceptions. It is a closed-book exam, and no study materials may be used.

#### 3. Experience

- Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) credential or Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) credential or licensed/certified as nutritionist/dietitian (LDN, CDN); or
- License as a healthcare practitioner in the U.S. with nutrition in legal scope of practice, including

MD/DO, DC, ND, NP, PA, RN, PharmD, Doctor of Nursing or foreign equivalent.

### **CKNS Re-Exam**

To re-take the CKNS exam, candidates should submit the CKNS Re-Exam registration form and pay the re-exam fee.

### **CKNS Recertification**

The mandatory recertification process provides the opportunity to demonstrate the retention, reinforcement, and expansion of knowledge and skills pertaining to new advances over the full spectrum of ketogenic nutrition science and nutrition care.

Each CKNS must recertify their credential every five years. This includes obtaining 30 Continuing Education (CE) credits and documenting them on the CKNS Recertification application. There is a recertification fee every five years which should be paid online.

## **About the Certified Nutritional Genomics Specialist® (CNGS®) Credential**

The Certified Nutritional Genomics Specialist (CNGS) certification identifies you as a trained professional in Nutritional Genomics. The first step to earning this credential is successfully completing the Nutritional Genomics Training Program offered by the American Nutrition Association (ANA).

### **CNGS Credential Eligibility Criteria**

There are three eligibility requirements to earn the CNGS: Education, Experience, and Examination. The fee for CNGS Certification is \$250.

#### **1. Education**

##### **Degree and training requirements**

**Degree Requirement:** The candidate must hold one of the following:

- Master's of Science degree in the field of nutrition or dietetics from a United States regionally/institutionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent; or
- Doctoral degree in the field of nutrition, dietetics, related health science or medicine, from a United States regionally/institutionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent; or

**Training Requirement:** All candidates must have completed all five modules of the American Nutrition Association (ANA) Nutritional Genomics Training program. Please do not apply to sit

for the exam until you have completed the training program.

## **2. Experience**

- Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) credential or Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) credential or licensed/certified as nutritionist/dietitian (LDN, CDN); or
- License as a healthcare practitioner in the U.S. with nutrition in legal scope of practice, including MD/DO, DC, ND, NP, PA, RN, PharmD, Doctor of Nursing or foreign equivalent.

## **3. Examination**

The candidate must achieve a passing score of 75% or higher on the Certification Examination for Nutritional Genomics Specialists. The exam is offered online on an ongoing basis.

The Certification Examination for Nutritional Genomics Specialists is designed to test the knowledge and skills acquired by those who have successfully completed the educational requirements outlined above. The examination contains 60 multiple-choice, single-answer questions. Candidates have 90 minutes to complete the exam with no exceptions. It is a closed-book exam, and no study materials may be used.

### **CNGS Re-Exam**

To re-take the CNGS exam, candidates should submit the CNGS Re-Exam registration form and pay the re-exam fee.

### **CNGS Recertification**

The mandatory recertification process provides the opportunity to demonstrate the retention, reinforcement, and expansion of knowledge and skills pertaining to new advances over the full spectrum of nutritional genomics science and nutrition care.

Each CNGS must recertify their credential every five years. This includes obtaining 30 Continuing Education (CE) credits and documenting them on the CNGS Recertification application. There is \$125 recertification fee every five years which should be paid online.

## **About the Certified Personalized Nutrition Practitioner® (CPNP®) Credential CPNP Credential Eligibility Criteria**

There are three eligibility requirements to earn the CPNP: Education, Experience, and

Examination. The fee for CPNP Certification is \$400

To be eligible for the Certified Personalized Nutrition Practitioner (CPNP) credential, candidates must meet each of the following requirements:

### **1. Education**

#### **Degree and Training Requirements**

Bachelor's degree or higher in the field of nutrition or dietetics from a United States regionally/institutionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent; or

**Training Requirement:** All candidates must have completed all units of the American Nutrition Association (ANA) Integrating Nutrition Into Practice course.

### **2. Examination**

The candidate must pass the Certification Examination for Personalized Nutrition Practitioners. The exam is offered online on an ongoing basis. The Certification Examination for Personalized Nutrition Practitioners is designed to test the knowledge and skills acquired by those who have successfully completed the educational requirements outlined above.

### **3. Experience**

State license or certification as a healthcare practitioner in the U.S. with nutrition in legal scope of practice, including MD/DO, DC, ND, NP, PA, APRN, Pharmacists, RDN, or foreign equivalent

#### **CPNP Recertification**

The mandatory recertification process provides the opportunity to demonstrate the retention, reinforcement, and expansion of knowledge and skills pertaining to new advances over the full spectrum of personalized nutrition.

Each CPNP must recertify their credential every five years. This includes obtaining 30 Continuing Education (CE) credits and documenting them on the CPNP Recertification application. There is \$200 recertification fee every five years which should be paid online.

## Appendix A:

# Exam Content Outline 2024-2028

Domain	Title	% of Test
I	Principles of Nutrition	13%
II	Nutritional Biochemistry	12%
III	Nutrients & Human Health	13%
IV	Nutrition Assessment	13%
V	Clinical Intervention & Monitoring	16%
VI	Medical Nutrition Therapy	15%
VII	Public Health	12%
VIII	Practice Management	6%

Domain topics are listed in order based on rating by CNSs of importance and time spent on JAS to help the EDC determine areas of focus for question writing.

### Domain I: Principles of Nutrition

- Practical application of evidenced based research
- Physiology of the digestive tract (motility, absorption, secretion, intestinal barrier function)
- Digestion, absorption, and transport of macronutrients and micronutrients
- Inflammatory pathways including insulin, oxidative stress, and fatty acid oxidation
- Effect of microbiome on metabolism of macronutrients and micronutrients, including use of probiotics and prebiotics
- Nutritional considerations related to physiologic changes associated with life cycle stage
- Effect of microbiome on body composition and metabolism
- Tailoring of assessment and therapy specific to life cycle stage
- Nutritional considerations related to psychological and social factors associated with life cycle stage
- Effects of age, gender, and physical activity on body composition and energy expenditure
- Disease risk and prevalence related to socioeconomic status, geographic residency, ethnicity, and life cycle stage
- Regulation of fluid, electrolyte, and acid-base balance
- Basic understanding of nutritional genomics research in practice
- Calculation of individual caloric requirements
- Estimation of caloric values of specific meals

## **Domain II: Nutritional Biochemistry**

- Nutritional considerations related to psychological and social factors associated with life cycle stage
- Metabolism (biochemical pathways and reactions) of carbohydrates, lipids, proteins, and micronutrients physiologic changes associated with life cycle stage
- Role of oxidative stress and detoxification pathways on health status
- Nutritional biochemical pathways including energy production and detoxification genomics research in practice
- Chemistry of enzymes, co-factors and organic acids
- Lipid metabolism, including cytokine and eicosanoid pathways
- Epigenetics: methyl donor biochemistry and hypo and hyper methylation specific to life cycle stage

## **Domain III: Nutrients & Human Health**

- Macronutrient and micronutrient food sources and impact on health
- Nutrient deficiency and insufficiency: causes, symptoms, and treatment
- Appropriate use of nutrient supplementation
- Supplemental sources of nutrients
- Functional and medical foods and their impact on health
- Role of oxidative stress and detoxification pathways on health status
- Structure and function of soluble and insoluble fiber and impacts on health
- Role of key phytochemicals and zoochemicals in health
- Chemistry of enzymes, co-factors and organic acids
- Impact of agricultural methods and food processing, preparation, and storage on nutrient value
- Tolerable upper intake levels of nutrients
- Nutrient toxicity: causes, symptoms, and treatment
- Dietary Guidelines and Dietary Reference Intakes for preventive and therapeutic interventions
- Nutrients used in fortification and applicable food sources

## **Domain IV: Nutrition Assessment**

- Lifestyle factors which impact nutrient needs and compliance such as exercise, stress, and sleep
- Comprehensive medical nutrition health history
- Use of behavior change strategies such as Motivational Interviewing and Stages of Change Theory
- Evaluation of laboratory data including identification of optimal value ranges
- Identify signs and symptoms of nutrient status
- Identification of symptoms that require medical referral
- Evaluation of functional testing (organic acid, stool, and saliva tests for adrenals and hormones)

- Evaluation of hormonal and neurotransmitter imbalances based on laboratory assessment
- Computerized analysis of food intake
- Body composition analysis (skin fold, bioelectrical impedance, waist-to-hip, BMI, other)
- Assessment of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs)
- Nutritional inborn errors of metabolism

#### **Domain V: Clinical Intervention & Monitoring**

- Gauging and optimizing client compliance
- Consideration of client's personal and cultural beliefs when developing nutrition intervention plans
- Malabsorption and effects on macronutrients and micronutrient status
- Effectiveness and contraindications of various diets
- Drug/herb action, duration of action, purpose and dose of a client's current therapeutic regimen
- Interactions between drugs and foods, alcohol, vitamins, minerals, herbs, phytochemicals, and zoochemicals
- Nutrient depletions related to commonly used drugs
- Evidence-based dose and duration of nutraceutical use for common conditions
- Evidence-based use of common botanical supplements for health promotion and common conditions
- Synergistic effects and antagonistic interactions of nutrients in foods and supplements
- Effects of disordered eating patterns on nutrition status, body composition, and body functions
- Safety, toxicity, and interactions of botanical supplements
- Good manufacturing practices and other quality markers for nutritional supplements
- Application of national guidelines, policies, consensus recommendations, and evidence-based research in the development of personalized therapeutic interventions
- Linking childhood behaviors to obesity and other chronic health issues in adults
- Impact of nutritional genomics on health

#### **Domain VI: Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT)**

- MNT for gastrointestinal disorders
- MNT for food allergies and intolerances
- MNT for autoimmune disorders
- MNT for mental health/mood disorders
- MNT for insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes
- MNT for cardiovascular disease, dyslipidemias, and hypertension
- MNT for endocrine disorders
- MNT for obesity
- MNT for cognitive and neurodegenerative disorders
- MNT for hepatic disorders

- MNT for neurodivergence
- MNT for dermatological disorders
- MNT for bone disorders
- MNT for type 1 diabetes
- MNT for cancer
- MNT for renal disorders
- MNT for hematologic disorders
- MNT for mastication, swallowing, and nutrient absorption disorders
- MNT for pulmonary disorders
- MNT for surgical procedures
- MNT for communicable diseases and sequelae
- MNT for bariatric surgery

#### **Domain VII: Public Health**

- Impact of environmental toxicity on health
- Translation of nutritional epidemiology into practice
- Factors that negatively affect food quality and safety
- Causes and preventative measures for common foodborne illnesses
- Identification of populations at risk for food safety issues
- Tracking current outbreaks of food borne illness and communication with clients

#### **Domain VIII: Practice Management**

- Compliance with ethical standards
- Working within scope of practice and in collaboration with other healthcare professionals as needed
- Evaluate sources of nutrition information for trustworthiness and bias
- HIPAA compliance requirements
- Licensure and certification
- Cultural competency and mitigating implicit bias
- Insurance coverage and reimbursement