



## Policy on Board Eligibility

### BACKGROUND

Beginning January 1, 2015, the American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) will recognize the term “board eligible” as described in the following policy.

### POLICY

ABEM recognizes physicians as board eligible if they meet ABEM requirements. Physicians may participate in the ABEM certification process by taking ABEM certification examinations, or retaking them if necessary, only if they are board eligible. All physicians who do not meet the ABEM requirements of board eligibility may not describe themselves as “ABEM board eligible.”

Board eligibility starts on the physician’s date of graduation from an Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)–, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC)–, or Australasian College of Emergency Medicine (ACEM)—accredited Emergency Medicine residency program, or an ABEM-approved combined residency program. For physicians who are in the certification process on the effective date of this policy, board eligibility starts on the policy effective date. Physicians can be designated as board eligible, and can maintain board eligible status, only if their medical licensure complies with the ABEM Policy on Medical Licensure.

The period of board eligibility ends on the date when the physician achieves certification in Emergency Medicine, or December 31 five years after the board eligibility start date, whichever comes first.

If the physician does not achieve certification by the end of the first five-year period of board eligibility, he or she will enter a second five-year period of board eligibility that ends when the physician achieves certification, or five years after the start date of the second five-year period of board eligibility if they meet the following requirements:

- They must have met their LLSA and CME requirements during their first five-year period of board eligibility.
- They must have passed the Qualifying Examination during their first five-year period of board eligibility.
- If they passed the Qualifying Examination prior to 2015, they must have attempted the Oral Certification Examination during their first five-year period of board eligibility.
- Physicians who do not meet these requirements will not be able to enter a second five-year period of board eligibility.

When physicians are not board eligible, they must cease and desist from making any representations of board eligibility. Any violation of this rule is considered a breach of ethical standards of medical practice.

Board eligible physicians who achieve certification can count their CME and LLSA activities completed during the calendar year in which they became certified toward their continuing certification requirements that start that year.

## **Requirements to Maintain ABEM Board Eligibility in the First Five Years after Graduation**

### Physicians without Delays in the Certification Process

Physicians who apply for certification during the first certification application period available to them, pass the first Qualifying Examination available to them, and then pass the first Oral Certification Examination available to them have no additional requirements under this policy.

### Physicians who Graduate from Emergency Medicine Residency Training in or after 2015 and Delay any Portion of the Certification Process

Delays in the certification process include:

- Not applying for certification in the first available certification application period
- Submitting an application for certification that is not approved as meeting the credential requirements and is therefore closed
- Not taking the first available Qualifying Examination
- Not passing the first available Qualifying Examination`
- Not taking the first available Oral Certification Examination
- Not passing the first available Oral Certification Examination

Board eligible physicians must continuously maintain medical licensure in compliance with the ABEM Policy on Medical Licensure to maintain board eligible status. They must also complete the following requirements starting January 1 of the year after their first delay in the certification process, and must continue meeting these requirements until they achieve certification, or their board eligible status ends, whichever comes first:

- Physicians must complete an average of 25 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits*<sup>TM</sup>, or equivalent, per year. This requirement supersedes and replaces the ABEM Policy on Emergency Medicine Certification Application CME Requirements.
- Physicians must complete an average of at least one ABEM LLSA test per year

Physicians must meet current CME and LLSA requirements before they can apply for certification, register for a certification examination, or request placement on an Oral Certification Examination wait list.

Physicians must pass the Qualifying Examination during the first five-year period of board eligibility if they wish to be granted a second period of board eligibility.

## **Requirements to Maintain ABEM Board Eligibility in the Second Five Years after Graduation**

Candidates who met their requirements during their first five years of board eligibility status will renew board eligible status for a second five years. Medical Licensure, LLSA, and CME requirements will continue throughout the second period of board eligibility.

### **Additional Training Requirements to Regain ABEM Board Eligibility Status**

Physicians who lose ABEM board eligible status may become ABEM board re-eligible only by successfully completing ABEM-approved additional training.

### **Availability of Oral Certification Examination**

If a board eligible physician delays an Oral Certification Examination by declining an assignment or by failing the examination, ABEM will guarantee an assignment to one of the examination administrations two years after the year in which the physician declines or fails the examination. If ABEM is unable to honor this guarantee, the candidate's period of board eligibility will be extended. This guarantee does not apply when there are fewer than two years remaining in the physician's final five years of board eligibility.

### Effective Date and Phase-in of Policy

This policy took effect January 1, 2015.

All residents who graduate from ACGME- or RCPCSC-accredited EM programs or ABEM-approved combined programs in or after 2015 must meet this policy to maintain board eligibility status.

All physicians who graduated from an EM residency program prior to 2015, or who applied for certification via the practice pathway and have an open, approved application as of January 1, 2015, will be recognized as ABEM board eligible for a period of five years starting January 1, 2015. They must meet the following requirements starting January 1, 2015, and ending when they achieve certification or their board eligible status ends, whichever comes first:

- Physicians must complete an average of 25 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits*<sup>TM</sup>, or equivalent, per year. This requirement supersedes and replaces the ABEM Policy on Emergency Medicine Certification Application CME Requirements.
- Physicians must complete an average of at least one ABEM LLSA test per year.

Physicians must meet current CME and LLSA requirements before they can apply for certification, register for a certification examination, or request placement on an Oral Certification Examination wait list.

Physicians must pass the Qualifying Examination during the first five-year period of board eligibility to be granted a second period of board eligibility. If they passed the Qualifying Examination prior to January 1, 2015, they must attempt the Oral Certification Examination during their first five years of board eligibility.

At the end of their first five-year period of board eligibility, if they have met all the requirements to maintain board eligible status, they will enter a second period of board eligibility.

### PROCEDURES

The Qualifying Exam is administered during one week in the fall each year to preserve exam security and integrity.

Each January, the Oral Certification Examination (OCE) seating schedule is created for both that year's spring and fall exam administrations; it is made up of planned and waitlisted candidates. Seating for each OCE administration is constrained by examiner and staff availability and other factors. If a physician delays an OCE by declining an assignment or failing the exam, they are guaranteed an assignment to one of the examination administrations two years after the year in which the delay occurred. If a physician wishes to take the OCE prior to that guaranteed assignment, they can request to be placed on the examination waitlist. Some physicians cannot take the exam on the date they are assigned and as those seats become available throughout the year, candidates are assigned to those seats from the waitlist. Candidates can add themselves to the waitlist immediately after they fail or decline an exam. Candidates who retake exams after failing have no advantage because each exam is different. There are no limits on OCE retakes during a candidate's period of board eligibility. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Oral Exams were not held. In 2021, ABEM will offer seven administrations of the OCE.

Approved applications are considered **open** and remain open until the candidate for certification achieves certification or is no longer ABEM board eligible. A candidate must have an open application to take certification examinations.

Approved certification applications can be **closed** if the physician's final period of board eligibility expires. Physicians cannot take ABEM certification exams if their application is closed.

**APPEAL PROCESS**

ABEM maintains an appeal process for physicians who do not meet the requirements to maintain ABEM board eligible status.

**EXCEPTIONS**

ABEM will consider individual exceptions to the Policy on Board Eligibility only in cases where extraordinary circumstances have prevented compliance with the policy, as determined solely by ABEM.