American Board of Emergency Medicine

Board Eligibility

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1. **How do I know if I am ABEM board eligible?** You can sign in to the ABEM website, select EM Certification, and view your board eligibility status if you:
   - Are about to graduate from EM residency training
   - Graduated in the past but do not have an open certification application on file
   - Had an open certification on file January 1, 2015

2. **How does ABEM define board eligibility?** Starting in 2015, EM residency graduates whose medical licensure meets ABEM policy are board eligible for a period of five years. On January 1, 2015, physicians who have applied to ABEM and are in the certification process, either awaiting assignment to the Qualifying Examination or the Oral Certification Examination, are also considered board eligible for a period of five years. By meeting specific requirements, board eligibility status can be maintained for an additional five years. Physicians must be designated as board eligible to pursue ABEM certification.

3. **For what period of time am I board eligible?** Your period of board eligibility ends when you become certified or December 31 five years after you have been designated as board eligible. View your period of board eligibility by signing in to the ABEM website and selecting the “EM Certification” button. It is possible to maintain board eligible status beyond five years by meeting specific requirements (see FAQ #14).

4. **What does it mean if my board eligible status is “pending”?** Your board eligibility status shows as pending under the following circumstances:
   - You have not graduated from an Emergency Medicine residency, but ABEM has verified your medical licensure status.
   - You have graduated, but ABEM has been unable to verify your medical licensure status. This usually means that ABEM does not have enough identification information for you on file to complete the verification. **If you graduated in the past but see “pending” when you check your board eligibility status, you should contact ABEM at BoardEliq@abem.org to provide any missing information.**
   - You have not yet graduated and ABEM has not yet completed verification of your medical licensure status. This is not cause for concern unless you still see the “pending” board eligibility status several weeks after you graduate.

   If your status is “pending” and you graduated from an Emergency Medicine residency prior to 2015, your five-year period of board eligibility started January 1, 2015. You also have additional certification requirements (see FAQ #7) that began January 1, 2015.

5. **Can ABEM confirm my board eligible status with my hospital credentialers?** Yes. ABEM can provide your board eligible status via phone. You can also request that a letter be sent to you, or you can arrange for ABEM to send a letter to credentialers. ABEM charges a $25 fee to send letters directly to third parties.
Contact ABEM at verify@abem.org to request a written verification of your board eligibility status.

6. **How often do I have to take a certification exam?** If you are designated as board eligible, you will no longer be required to take a certification examination at least once every three years as was required before 2015. However, if you did not pass the Qualifying Examination before 2015, you must pass the examination by the end of your first five-year period of board eligibility to be granted a second period of board eligibility. If you passed the Qualifying Examination before 2015, you must attempt, but do not need to pass, the Oral Certification Examination by the end of your first five-year period of board eligibility to be granted a second period of board eligibility. ABEM will guarantee an assignment to one of the Oral Certification Examination administrations two years after the year in which the physician reactivates his or her ABEM file.

7. **What are additional certification requirements?** Board eligible physicians who delay any portion of the certification process must complete additional certification requirements to apply for certification (if they have not already done so), register for the Qualifying Examination, register for the Oral Certification Examination, request placement on an Oral Certification Examination wait list, or be granted a second period of board eligibility. Additional certification requirements are:
   - Complete an average of one ABEM LLSA per year
   - Complete an average of 25 AMA PRA Category 1™ (or equivalent) CME credits per year

   These requirements begin the year after the physician first delays a portion of the certification process, and continue until he or she becomes certified or board eligibility expires. Requirements can begin while your board eligibility status is “pending” (see FAQ #4 for an explanation of the “pending” status).

8. **How do I know if I have delayed a portion of the certification process, referred to in FAQ #7?** You have not delayed any portion of the certification process if you apply for certification in the first application period available to you, take and pass the Qualifying Examination the calendar year you apply, and take and pass the Oral Certification Examination the following calendar year. You have delayed one or more portions of the certification process if you:
   - Graduated from EM residency training in the past but have not applied for certification
   - You applied for certification, but not in the first application period available to you
   - You did not take the first Qualifying Examination administered after your certification application was approved as meeting ABEM credential requirements
   - You did not pass the Qualifying Examination
   - You did not take the first Oral Certification Examination to which you were assigned
   - You did not pass the Oral Certification Examination

   If you have delayed a portion of the certification process, you have additional certification requirements (see FAQ #7) that you will see if you sign in to the ABEM website and select the “EM Certification” button.

9. **What is the “first application period available to me,” referred to in FAQ #8?** If you graduate from EM residency training between mid-April and October 31 of a given calendar year, the first application period available to you is the one that occurs that same calendar year, usually open between mid-April and early November.
If you graduate between November 1 of the previous year and mid-April, the same application period is the first one available to you; however, it may open for you earlier than April. If you are uncertain which application period is the first one available to you, contact ABEM at BoardElig@abem.org.

10. **Is the CME additional certification requirement the same as the requirement ABEM has always had for physicians who apply for certification more than one year after graduating from EM residency training?** No. The new CME requirement is different and has replaced the previous requirement. Previously, 50 CME credits per year were required; now, only 25 *AMA PRA Category 1™* credits, or equivalent, per year, are required. If you graduated from residency training in the past but have not applied for certification, you have a new CME requirement that started January 1, 2015.

11. **How do I know if I have additional certification requirements?** If you have delayed any portion of the certification process, you have additional certification requirements. You can check your requirements by signing in to the ABEM website and selecting the “EM Certification” button. You may have additional certification requirements if your board eligibility status is “pending” (see FAQ #4 for an explanation of the “pending” status).

12. **When must I complete my additional certification requirements?** You must complete additional certification requirements to take your next step in the certification process. You can check your requirement due dates by signing in to the ABEM website and selecting the “EM Certification” button.

13. **How can I meet my additional certification requirements?** When you sign in to the ABEM website, www.abem.org, and select the “EM Certification” button, you can view and complete your additional certification requirements. You can register for and take the LLSA online, register for and earn credit for the optional LLSA CME activity, and attest to completing the required number of CME credits. If you are ABEM board eligible, but do not have additional certification requirements, you will not be able to take an LLSA test, participate in an ABEM LLSA CME activity, or attest to completion of CME.

14. **Can I use the educational and training experiences of residency or fellowship to fulfill the additional CME portion of the additional certification requirements?** Yes. The CME portion of the additional certification requirements can be met by the educational experiences a physician completed during a year of a residency or fellowship, as long as it was completed in the year the CME requirement was due.

15. **Is there a way for me to remain board eligible after five years?** Yes. To do so, you must meet the following requirements by the end of your first five-year period of board eligibility:
   • You must have passed the Qualifying Examination during the first period of board eligibility
   • If you passed the Qualifying Examination before January 1, 2015, you must take the Oral Certification Examination at least once by December 31, 2019
   • You must have met all of your additional certification requirements (LLSA and CME) by the end of your first period of board eligibility
• Your medical licensure must continuously comply with the ABEM Policy on Medical Licensure

If you meet these requirements you enter a second period of board eligibility the day after your first period of board eligibility ends. This second period of board eligibility ends December 31, five years later. If you have not achieved ABEM certification by that time, you can no longer be board eligible and will be unable to take ABEM examinations to become certified. Board eligibility can be reestablished after completing additional training. ABEM is reviewing what the additional training will entail.

16. **How can I become board eligible again if I lose board eligible status?** If you lose board eligible status because you do not meet the requirements to be granted a second period of board eligibility, or because you do not become certified by the end of your final period of board eligibility, the only way you can become board eligible again is by completing additional training. ABEM is reviewing what the additional training will entail.

17. **I was previously certified and am now a former diplomate. Am I board eligible?** No. Board eligibility only applies to the initial certification process. However, all physicians who were previously certified by ABEM have an opportunity to regain certification. For information about how to regain certification, see the ABEM Policy on Regaining Certification.

18. **I am planning to pursue certification in an ABEM-sponsored subspecialty. Am I board eligible for the subspecialty?** No. Board eligibility does not currently apply to ABEM subspecialty certification.

19. **Why has ABEM changed its position regarding board eligibility?** In the past, ABEM did not recognize the term “board eligible” and there was no time limit for emergency physicians who met ABEM eligibility requirements to become certified. The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) has determined that board eligibility must be for a defined and limited period of time. One of the key reasons to do this is to create a uniform application of the term for hospital and practice credentialers and the medical community.

20. **Where can I get more information about board eligibility?** More detail about ABEM board eligibility can be found on the ABEM website, www.abem.org. If you still have questions, you can send an email to BoardElig@abem.org.

**December 2016**