

American Board of Emergency Medicine
Surgical Critical Care (SCC)
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Beginning July 2013, ABEM-certified physicians can enter a formal pathway for SCC training and obtain subspecialty certification in SCC through the American Board of Surgery (ABS). In 2013, the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) approved this opportunity for ABEM-certified physicians. These FAQs are maintained by ABEM; however, they are superseded by the policies and procedures of the ABS.

- 1. What are the eligibility criteria that ABEM-certified physicians must meet to apply for SCC subspecialty certification?** ABEM-certified physicians must complete a modified advanced preliminary year of surgical training prior to entering a one-year ACGME-accredited fellowship in SCC at the same institution that the preliminary year was completed. The ABS SCC requirements for certification are not being changed in any way; rather, this new pathway will expand eligibility to enter SCC fellowships to include Emergency Physicians.

A time-limited exception applies to ABEM-certified physicians who completed an ACGME-accredited SCC fellowship prior to 2012. See FAQ 5.

NOTE: Physicians certified by the American Osteopathic Board of Emergency Medicine must contact the American Board of Surgery to determine eligibility for SCC training and certification. ABEM does not establish or implement eligibility criteria for SCC subspecialty certification.

- 2. How do I apply for ABS SCC certification?** ABEM-certified physicians who meet the ABS eligibility requirements may apply for certification through the ABS online application process, which opens in early spring each year (see [Application Instructions](#)).
- 3. Who will issue the certificate to ABEM-certified physicians who pass the SCC subspecialty certification examination?** Certification in SCC will be through the ABS. ABEM-certified physicians must apply for certification to the ABS. The ABS also approves qualified physicians to take the SCC subspecialty certification examination and issues SCC certificates.
- 4. I just finished my EM training and I have not achieved my ABEM EM certification; can I still enter SCC fellowship training?** Yes. Individuals who have completed EM training but not yet achieved ABEM EM certification may enter SCC training; however, they will not be eligible to apply for SCC certification until they are ABEM certified.
- 5. Is there a “grandparent” pathway for ABEM-certified physicians?** Yes. The ABS is offering a time-limited pathway for ABEM-certified physicians who completed an SCC fellowship before July 2012 to become certified in SCC. This pathway opens July 1, 2020 and closes June 30, 2023.
- 6. What are the [general ABS SCC eligibility requirements](#)?**
 - ABEM EM certification
 - Medical licensure, SCC fellowship training, professional activity, and case logs in compliance with ABS policy. Details are available on the [ABS website](#).
 - Adherence to the [ABS Ethics and Professionalism Policy](#)

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- 7. Does the completion of the required preliminary year in surgical training have to be followed by training in an ACGME-accredited SCC fellowship training program at the same institution?** Yes. EM-trained physicians must complete one year as an advanced preliminary resident in surgery at the institution in which they will enroll in the SCC fellowship. The year should be jointly defined and supervised by the general surgery program director and the SCC program director.
- 8. What is the required curriculum in the preliminary year of surgical training?** The preliminary year should consist of 12 months of intermediate-level surgical experience in the management of patients with abdominal and thoracic operations and complex surgical problems. Services that are acceptable for this experience are those providing the following:
- abdominal surgery of all types
 - trauma surgery
 - solid organ transplantation
 - vascular surgery
 - thoracic surgery
 - abdominal surgical oncology
 - surgical infections

NOTE: Surgical ICU rotations may not comprise more than three months of the total 12 months.

Once enrolled in the SCC training program, the individual must hold an accredited position and be listed on the SCC program roster maintained by the ABS. Otherwise the individual will not be accepted into the SCC certification process.

- 9. Is prior approval required for the preliminary year?** Yes. Pre-approval of the preliminary year is required. SCC programs that wish to establish a pathway for ABEM-certified physicians must submit to the ABS, in writing, a detailed description of their proposed preliminary year program. The request should be mailed on official letterhead to the ABS executive director. The executive director of the ABS will send a decision regarding the preliminary year by letter to the program.

NOTE: The SCC Program Directors Society has published specific curriculum recommendations for the preliminary year. They are available under the members-only section of the [SCCPDS website](#) or from the [JACS website](#). See also the [RRC-Surgery's requirements \(pdf\)](#).

- 10. What is the format and content of the examination?** The SCC certification examination is a one-day examination consisting of approximately 200 multiple choice questions lasting five hours. It is administered using a secure, computerized examination platform. The ABS administers this examination at computer testing centers across the U.S. An examination content outline is available at [SCC Certifying Examination Content Outline \(pdf\)](#).
- 11. What are the requirements to maintain certification in SCC?** Upon successful completion of the SCC certification examination, ABEM-certified physicians will need to

participate in either ABEM's continuing certification process or the [ABS MOC Program](#) to maintain their SCC certificate.

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