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Executive Director

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The policies and procedures specified in the Candidate Handbook are subject to change without notice.

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About the Candidate Handbook

Introduction
Congratulations on your decision to pursue the Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) or the Certified Nutrition Specialist–Scholar (CNS-S) credential. We commend your commitment to your career and the nutrition care profession. The Candidate Handbook provides information essential to the certification process from application, through examination and renewal.

About the Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists (BCNS)
Established in 1993, the BCNS is the premier certification body providing credentialing of nutrition care professionals with advanced degrees and training in nutrition science.

BCNS’ Mission
The BCNS’ mission is to advance human health through the science and practice of professional nutrition care. Certified Nutrition Specialist professionals are on the front lines using medical nutrition therapy to battle the epidemic of obesity and chronic disease, and the BCNS supports these efforts and certifies nutrition professionals that maintain the highest standard of nutrition competence.

BCNS Board of Directors
Governed by leading nutritionists, the board of directors endeavors to advance nutrition care by certifying competent nutritionists, and by providing nutritional education to professionals and the public.

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 policies and procedures, are directly related to the purpose of the certification programs.

BCNS Credentials Council
The credentials council is responsible for the development of the BCNS eligibility requirements, subject to approval by the board of directors, and for the evaluation and authorization of all CNS/CNS-S 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) and the Certified Nutrition Specialist–Scholar (CNS-S) certification programs.

BCNS Examination Development Committee
The examination development committee responsibilities are cyclical and include the development of content, review of content relevancy, evaluation of performance data and expertise with the establishment of the passing standard for the examination.
BCNS Examination Development Process

The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists ensures the validity, reliability and legal defensibility of the Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) and the Certified Nutrition Specialist–Scholar (CNS-S) certification programs. 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 nutrition profession.

The content of the BCNS 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 or CNS-S 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 BCNS certification examination.

The BCNS examination is based on an explicit set of competencies. These competencies have been determined through a job analysis study conducted on practitioners. The competencies are grouped into domains, subdomains and tasks. As the BCNS 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 BCNS website, NutritionSpecialists.org.

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 panels of trained subject matter experts. The examination development committee, working with the psychometric consultant, regularly reviews items and approves the examinations.
About the Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) Credential

Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS)
The CNS is formal recognition for nutrition care professionals who have met rigorous and demanding eligibility requirements, including postgraduate educations, subsequent supervised practice in professional nutrition and demonstration of a depth of knowledge appropriate for effective practice in the profession of nutrition.

Eligibility Requirements
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 both work experience and demonstrated knowledge are essential for individuals earning the CNS credential.

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

Degree Requirement
1. Master of science or doctoral degree in a field of nutrition from a United States regionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent; or
2. Doctoral degree in a field of clinical healthcare (including, but not limited to, MD, DO, DC, DDS, Doctor of Nursing, ND, Pharm.D) from a United States regionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent.
   - “Regionally accredited” means an institution that was accredited, at the time the degree was awarded, by a regional accreditation body in the United States which is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the United States Department of Education.
   - Degrees from institutions outside the U.S. must be from that country’s equivalent of a regionally accredited U.S. institution.

Coursework Requirement

For Nutritionists and Other Advance-Degree Health Professionals
The academic requirement listed is a minimum, for-credit coursework of 30 semester credit hours in the following categories:

1. Graduate Nutrition Courses [9 hours of graduate semester credits required]
   Examples include but are not limited to:
   - Developmental nutrition
   - Metabolism of vitamins & minerals
• Micro/macro nutrients
• Nutrition assessment
• Therapeutic nutrition

2. **Biochemistry [6 semester credit hours]**
   *Examples include but are not limited to:*
   • Biochemistry of nutrition
   • Clinical biochemistry
   • Medical biochemistry

3. **Physiology or Anatomy/Physiology [3 semester credit hours]**
   • Anatomy and physiology I, II
   • Anatomy
   • Medical physiology
   • Nutritional biochemistry and physiology
   • Health and wellness physiology I

4. **Clinical or Life Sciences Courses [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

**Coursework Requirements for MDs and DOs**

**Graduate Nutrition Courses (9 hours of graduate semester credits or 135 CE equivalents)**

Two categories of nutrition coursework are required:

**Category 1 -- Foundational Nutrition** *(Min. of 4 graduate level semester credit hours or 60 CE equivalents)*

Must address CNS Foundational Nutrition Coursework Topics which include: nutritional biochemistry, developmental nutrition, energy balance and caloric values of foods, body composition and regulation of metabolism, metabolism and function of nutrients, macro-and micronutrient sources and quality, bioactive components in foods, nutrient requirements.

**Category 2 -- Advanced Nutrition** *(Min. of 5 graduate level semester credit hours or 75 CE equivalents)*

Examples of courses include but are not limited to: Nutritional Therapeutics, Nutrition Assessment, Functional Medicine Nutrition, Pharmacology and Drug-Nutrient Interactions, Functional Medicine for Autoimmune Diseases, Nutrition and Digestive Health.

1. **Biochemistry [6 semester credit hours]**
   *Examples include but are not limited to:*
   • Biochemistry of nutrition
   • Clinical biochemistry
   • Medical biochemistry
2. **Physiology or Anatomy/Physiology [3 semester credit hours]**
   - Anatomy and physiology I, II
   - Anatomy
   - Medical physiology
   - Nutritional biochemistry and physiology
   - Health and wellness physiology

3. **Clinical or Life Sciences Courses [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

**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 with doctoral degrees in a field of clinical healthcare must provide the 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.

**Letters of Recommendation Requirement**
Ensure submission of two letters of recommendation from healthcare professionals familiar with your work in the field of nutrition in accordance with the following guidelines:
   a. On organization/entity letterhead
   b. Indicate the relationship with the applicant
   c. Describe 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
   d. Sent via email to Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org

**Photograph Requirement**
All applicants are required to submit a current photograph as part of the application process to sit for the examination. The photograph should not exceed six inches in width or height. The BCNS will use the photograph for identification purposes only; the photograph will not be distributed or used for any external purposes without written consent by the applicant.
CNS Credential Eligibility Criteria

CNS Supervised Practice Experience Requirement for Nutritionists and Other Advance-Degree Health Professionals

1. Satisfactory completion of the CNS supervised practice experience is essential to being awarded the CNS credential. The program is structured to ensure each candidate obtains the in-depth knowledge and skill expected of an advanced-level nutrition professional, while maintaining the flexibility required to achieve individual career goals. As such, candidates are responsible for tailoring their own supervised experience based on all program requirements outlined herein, and for locating supervisors that meet the qualifications listed below.

2. Although the supervised experience program may be completed after passing the BCNS certifying examination, the CNS credential will not be awarded until the BCNS credentials council has approved the experience. It is worth noting that some evidence shows that those with experience perform better on the examination than those without.

3. The CNS supervised practice experience consists of 1,000 hours of supervised practice experience in clinical nutrition care in the following nutrition categories and in accordance with CNS Supervised Practice Experience Competencies (see document):
   a. **Category A–Nutrition assessment** (minimum 200 hours).
   b. **Category B–Nutrition intervention, education, counseling or management** (minimum 200 hours)
   c. **Category C–Nutrition monitoring or evaluation** (minimum 200 hours).
   d. Remaining hours may be in any of the above categories.

4. The supervised experience may be obtained entirely or partly from:
   a. Practicum as part of a master’s or doctoral degree program
   b. Internship, residency or clinical rotation
   c. Clinical practice
   d. Community setting
   e. Institutional setting
   f. Home health care setting

5. The 1,000 hours may come from multiple venues and supervisors. Supervisors may supervise a candidate in multiple settings. Each supervisor must meet the eligibility requirements and be approved by the BCNS.

6. To be eligible, all supervised experience must be gained after the candidate matriculates from the qualifying degree program.

7. The supervised experience of candidates who have had significant practice experience prior to applying for the CNS credential will be evaluated on an individual basis.

**Supervisor Qualifications**

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

1. Must have a minimum of three full-time years of clinical experience in nutrition care;
2. Must be at least one of the following:
   a. Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) in good standing; or
   b. Master’s of science or doctoral degree in a field of nutrition; or
   c. MD or other doctoral-level licensed professional whose scope of practice includes nutrition and has training in nutrition.

Additional Considerations for Supervisors

- The above eligibility requirements apply to all supervisors, including faculty of a degree program offering practicum or internship.

- A regionally accredited institution must have awarded the supervisor’s qualifying degree.

- Licensed or certified nutritionists or dietitians are not eligible as supervisors unless they also hold a master’s or doctoral degree in the field of nutrition.

- Approved supervisors may supervise multiple candidates on an ongoing basis.

Supervisor Responsibilities

1. Supervisors are responsible for completing the CNS Supervised Practice Experience Supervisor Approval Request Form and submitting it to the BCNS along with current CV.

2. Supervisors are responsible for assisting each candidate in tailoring an experience that meets the CNS Supervised Practice Experience Requirements, CNS Supervised Practice Experience Competencies and the candidate’s career goals.

3. Each supervisor is responsible for holding regularly scheduled sessions with the candidate. Meetings may be held in-person or remotely.

4. Each supervisor is responsible for verifying the completion of the hours reported on the CNS Supervised Practice Experience Candidate’s Report, rating the candidate’s performance in each of the designated competency categories and submitting the CNS Supervised Practice Experience Supervisor’s Report for approval by the BCNS credentials council.

It is expected that holding regularly scheduled sessions with the candidate will allow supervisors to identify competency areas that require improvement on an ongoing basis so any deficiencies may be adequately addressed during the supervised practice experience.

Candidate Responsibilities

1. Each candidate is responsible for locating the setting(s) for the experience and qualified supervisor(s), and for working with the supervisor(s) to tailor the experience in accordance with CNS Supervised Practice Experience Requirements and CNS Supervised Practice Experience Competencies.

2. Each candidate is responsible for ensuring the completion and submission of the CNS Supervised Practice Experience Supervisor Approval Request Form for each supervisor.
3. Each CNS candidate must document and attest to the completion of 1,000 hours by submitting the following documentation:
   a. CNS Supervised Practice Experience Candidate’s Report
   b. Part B of the candidate application.

4. State licensure requirements for supervised experience vary from state to state. The BCNS strongly recommends each candidate review the current licensing laws in the state they intend to practice in before beginning the supervised experience to determine if the supervised experience meets state licensing and record-keeping requirements. The BCNS approval of a supervised experience does not currently guarantee approval in all states. (Refer to NutritionAdvocacy.org for information about state requirements.)

Relevant Documents
1. CNS Supervised Practice Experience Competencies
2. CNS Supervised Practice Experience Supervisor Approval Request Form
3. CNS Supervised Practice Experience Supervisor’s Report
4. CNS Supervised Practice Experience Candidate’s Report
5. CNS Supervised Practice Experience Supervisor FAQs

CNS Practice Experience Requirements for MDs and DOs
1. Experience must be completed after academic requirements have been met or while they are in progress. Candidates are responsible for 1,000 hours clinical nutrition practice experience achieved in clinical practice or as part of fellowship and residency, as defined by the following:
   • Completion of 1,000 documented hours of clinical nutrition experience in the following categories –
     a. Nutrition Assessment (200 hours)
     b. Nutrition Intervention, Education, Counseling, and Management (200 hours)
     c. Nutrition Monitoring or Evaluation (200 hours)
     d. Remaining 400 hours in any of the above categories or a combination
     --and--
   • Submission of 5 case studies in accordance with specified format, requiring approval by the Credentials Council.

Experience may be obtained through –
• Residency or fellowship in clinical nutrition or part of training in a related subspecialty that incorporates nutrition. Examples may include gastroenterology, endocrinology, critical care, nephrology, cardiology, or others; and/or
• Clinical practice

Relevant Documents:
1. CNS Foundational Nutrition Coursework Topics
2. Eligible Nutrition Courses for MD/DOs
3. CNS Practice Experience Competencies for MD/DOs
4. CNS Practice Experience for MD/DOs Case Study Report Instructions
5. CNS Practice Experience Candidate’s Report for MD/DOs

About the Certified Nutrition Specialist – Scholar (CNS-S) Credential

Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS-S)
The CNS-S is formal recognition for nutrition care professionals who have met rigorous and demanding eligibility requirements including postgraduate educations, subsequent experience in the nutrition industry, research, academia, writing or clinical practice and demonstration of authored nutrition papers, texts, research and patents.

Eligibility Requirements
The BCNS has developed requirements for eligibility to ensure the application process is fair and impartial for all applicants. Each requirement has been established to ensure that individuals certified by the BCNS have a level of knowledge and proficiency needed to provide nutrition care services at a mastery level. A combination of both work experience and demonstrated knowledge are essential for individuals earning the CNS-S credential.

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

Coursework Requirement
The academic requirement listed is a minimum, for-credit coursework of 30 semester credit hours in the following categories.

1. Graduate Nutrition Courses [9 hours of graduate semester credits required]
   Examples include but are not limited to:
   • Developmental nutrition
   • Metabolism of vitamins & minerals
   • Micro/macro nutrients
   • Nutrition assessment
   • Therapeutic nutrition

2. Biochemistry [6 semester credit hours]
   Examples include but are not limited to:
   • Biochemistry of nutrition
   • Clinical biochemistry
• Medical biochemistry

3. Physiology or Anatomy/Physiology [3 semester credit hours]
   • Anatomy and physiology I, II
   • Anatomy
   • Medical physiology
   • Nutritional biochemistry and physiology
   • Health and wellness physiology I

4. Clinical or Life Sciences Courses [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

Degree Requirement
1. Doctoral degree in nutrition or related field from a United States regionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent; or
2. Doctoral degree in a field of clinical healthcare (including, but not limited to, MD, DO, DC, DDS, Doctor of Nursing, ND, Pharm.D) from a United States regionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent.
   • “Regionally accredited” means an institution that was accredited, at the time the degree was awarded, by a regional accreditation body in the United States which is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the United States Department of Education
   • Degrees from institutions outside the U.S. must be from that country’s equivalent of a regionally accredited U.S. institution.

Transcript Requirement
Official school transcripts for coursework and the conferring of the masters of science or doctoral degree 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 (Optional)
Applicants must provide the 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.

Letters of Recommendation Requirement
Ensure submission of two letters of recommendation from health care professionals familiar with the candidates work as a nutrition professional in accordance with the following guidelines:
a. On organization/entity letterhead
b. Indicate the relationship with the applicant
c. Describe 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
d. Sent via email to Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org

Photograph Requirement
All applicants are required to submit a current photograph as part of the application process to sit for the examination. The photograph should not exceed six inches in width or height. BCNS will use the photograph for identification purposes only; the photograph will not be distributed or used for any external purposes without written consent by the applicant.
CNS-S Credential Eligibility Criteria

CNS-S Experience Requirement
After successfully passing the BCNS examination, the CNS-S candidate must demonstrate evidence of experience in nutrition in accordance with the following:

Documentation of a minimum of the equivalent of three years experience in any one or more of the following categories:

a. Nutrition industry
b. Research
c. Academia
d. Writing
e. Clinical practice

CNS-S Scholarship Requirement
After successfully passing the BCNS examination, the CNS-S candidate must demonstrate evidence of scholarship in nutrition in accordance with the following:

Documentation of a minimum of five of any combination of the following:

a. Nutrition papers in peer-reviewed journals or trade journals
b. Nutrition chapters in textbooks or reference books
c. Non-professional nutrition books that are based on sufficient scientific research
d. Nutrition-related patents
e. Comparable works of scholarship
Applying for Certification

Before submitting an application, carefully review the information contained in this handbook. Taking the certification examination is voluntary. 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.

Application Requirements
To apply for the CNS or CNS-S certification program, the corresponding certification application, appropriate fee and required forms/documentation must be submitted.

When completing the CNS or CNS-S Certification Application be sure to:
1. Ensure the name on the application matches the name on the identification (ID) to be used for admission to the test site (see section on Identification Requirements).
2. Sign and date the application in ink (if using a hardcopy application).
3. Make copies for your records.
4. Include the correct application fee by referring to the BCNS website for current examination pricing. Payment may be made online at NutritionSpecialists.org
5. Submit completed applications to Applications@NutritionSpecialists.org

CNS Certification Application
The CNS Certification Application is separated into two parts, Part A and B. Part A (candidate and academic information) is required of any applicant seeking eligibility to sit for the BCNS examination. Part B (practice experience) is required of any applicant seeking CNS certification.

*Part B may be completed and submitted with Part A if the applicant has fulfilled the practice experience requirement; OR may be completed and submitted independently after passing the BCNS examination.*

Part A Submission Requirements:
- a. Completion and submission of the CNS Certification Application and corresponding fee.
- b. Ensure submission of official school transcripts for coursework and the conferring of the masters of science or doctoral degree, or its foreign equivalent, and all mandatory coursework.
- c. Submission of proof of the applicant’s applicable professional license for verification.
- d. Submission of a recent curriculum vitae or resume.
- e. Ensure submission of two letters of recommendation from health care professionals.
- f. Submission of a current photograph.
- g. Submission of request for Special Accommodations Form and Documentation of Disability-Related Needs Form (if applicable).

Part B with Part A Submission Requirements:
- a. Completion and submission of the CNS Certification Application and corresponding fee.
b. Ensure submission of official school transcripts for coursework and the conferring of the masters of science or doctoral degree, or its foreign equivalent, and all mandatory coursework.
c. Submission of proof of the applicant’s applicable professional license for verification.
d. Submission of a recent curriculum vitae or resume.
e. Ensure submission of two letters of recommendation from health care professionals.
f. Submission of a current photograph.
g. Submission of Request for Special Accommodations Form and Documentation of Disability-Related Needs Form (if applicable).
h. For Nutritionists and Other Advance-Degreed Health Professionals
   i. Completion and submission of the Supervisor Approval Request Form with the supervisor’s CV or resume.
   ii. Completion and submission of the CNS Supervised Practice Experience Candidate’s Report.
   iii. Completion and submission of the CNS Supervised Practice Experience Supervisor’s Report.
   iv. Submission of the supervisor’s Letter of Detailing Experience
i. For MD/DOs
   i. CNS Practice Experience Candidate’s Report for MD/DOs
   ii. CNS Practice Experience Case Study Report for MD/DOs

Part B Submission Requirements:
   a. Submission of an updated curriculum vitae or resume
   b. For Nutritionists and Other Advance-Degreed Health Professionals
      i. Completion and submission of the Supervisor Approval Request Form with the supervisor’s CV or resume.
      ii. Completion and submission of the CNS Supervised Practice Experience Candidate’s Report.
      iii. Completion and submission of the CNS Supervised Practice Experience Supervisor’s Report.
      iv. Submission of the supervisor’s Letter of Detailing Experience
   c. For MD/DOs
      i. CNS Practice Experience Candidate’s Report for MD/DOs
      ii. CNS Practice Experience Case Study Report for MD/DOs

For Nutritionists and Other Advance-Degreed Health Professionals, CNS requires CNS applicants to provide documentation of 1,000 hours of supervised practice experience in defined nutrition categories. BCNS has defined a qualified CNS Supervisor as having a minimum of three full-time years of clinical experience in nutrition care, and must have one of the following credentials:
1. Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) in good standing
2. Masters of science or doctoral degree in a field of nutrition with a state license or certification
3. MD or other doctoral-level licensed professional whose scope of practice includes nutrition

Candidates must ensure that the supervisor submits the completed CNS Supervised Practice Experience Supervisor Approval Request form to the BCNS.
For MD/DOs, CNS requires CNS applicants to provide documentation of 1,000 hours clinical nutrition practice experience achieved in clinical practice or as part of fellowship or residency. They are also required to submit five case studies.

*Please note: CNS candidates have five years to complete the practice experience requirement once passing the examination. Practice hours may be accrued as soon as an individual has matriculated into a graduate program that fulfills the BCNS degree requirement.

CNS-S Certification Application

The CNS-S Certification Application is separated into two parts—Part A and B. Part A (candidate and academic information) is required of any applicant seeking eligibility to sit for the BCNS examination. Part B (experience and scholarship information) is required of any applicant seeking CNS-S certification. Part B may either be completed and submitted with Part A, if the applicant has fulfilled the Experience and Scholarship requirement; OR may be completed and submitted independently after passing the BCNS examination.

Part A Submission Requirements:

a. Completion and submission of the CNS-S Certification Application and corresponding fee.

b. Ensure submission of official school transcripts for coursework of the conferring of the doctoral degree, or its foreign equivalent, and all mandatory coursework.

c. Submission of proof of the applicant’s applicable professional license for verification.

d. Submission of a recent curriculum vitae or resume.

e. Ensure submission of two letters of recommendation from health care professionals.

f. Submission of a current photograph.

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

Part B with Part A Submission Requirements:

a. Completion and submission of the CNS-S Certification Application and corresponding fee.

b. Ensure submission of official school transcripts for coursework and the conferring of the doctoral degree, or its foreign equivalent, and all mandatory coursework.

c. Submission of proof of the applicant’s applicable professional license for verification.

d. Submission of a recent curriculum vitae or resume.

e. Ensure submission of two letters of recommendation from health care professionals.

f. Submission of a current photograph.

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

h. Completion and submission of the evidence of three years experience.

i. Completion and submission of the evidence of five works of scholarship.
Part B Submission Requirements:
   a. Submission of an updated curriculum vitae or resume
   b. Completion and submission of the evidence of three years experience.
   c. Completion and submission of the evidence of five works of scholarship.

BCNS Examination Dates, Deadlines and Fees

Examination Dates
The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists offers bi-annual testing in various locations throughout the United States. Current examination dates, corresponding application deadlines and refund deadlines are published on the BCNS website.

Examination Fees

- CNS/CNS-S Certification Application Processing Fee
  - Non-refundable application processing fee: $50

- Examination Fee
  - BCNS examination registration fee (1st Time Applicant Only): $300
  - Re-testing BCNS examination registration Fee: $200

Application Processing
Upon receipt of the CNS/CNS-S certification application and the required supporting materials and fees, the credentials council will begin the evaluation process to determine applicant eligibility. Applicants are notified by email of their eligibility status to sit for the BCNS examination—the examination fee is due within seven calendar days of this notification. An official letter with examination instructions, location, date, time and proctor contact information is sent via email approximately 30 days prior to the examination date.

Incomplete and Late Applications
Application forms, the application fee and all supporting materials must be received by BCNS no later than the published application deadline, without exception. Part B of the CNS or CNS-S certification application and all required materials must be received by the BCNS no later than five years from the candidate’s testing date.
An application will be considered incomplete if any of the requested information is missing, illegible or the appropriate fee has not been paid.

Candidates whose applications have been internally reviewed and deemed incomplete or ineligible will be notified via email. Candidates will be notified of the application’s deficiencies and possible remedies. If the candidate does not respond or rectify the noted deficiencies prior to the published deadline, the application cannot be processed.

**Certification Application Audits**

The submission of an application indicates a candidate’s agreement to comply with the terms of the audit process. All applications are subject to an audit, although only a percentage of applications are selected for an audit. The selection of an application for audit is random.

Candidates may be asked to provide any documentation or material substantiating eligibility.

BCNS will provide audited candidates with a reasonable window of time to submit the requested documentation. Upon receipt of the requested documentation, candidates will receive an audit status notification via email within seven business days. Candidates failing to meet the audit requirements will receive a refund of their examination fee minus an administrative fee of $50.

**Eligibility Appeals**

A candidate whose eligibility has been denied by the BCNS may appeal the decision to the BCNS executive director within 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. Eligibility appeals will be reviewed by the BCNS executive director and responded to in writing within 15 business days of the postmarked appeal request letter.

If the BCNS executive director cannot resolve the issue, the appeal will be referred to the board of directors. The decision of the board of directors is final.

**Nondiscrimination**

The BCNS does not discriminate against any candidate for certification on the basis of race, color, creed, age, gender, national origin, religion, disability, marital status, parental status, ancestry, sexual orientation, military discharge status, source of income or any other status protected by law. All candidates for certification will be judged solely on the criteria determined by the BCNS board of directors.
Scheduling the Examination

Assigned Testing Site
The CNS and CNS-S Certification Applications include an examination site information section. Examination sites are tentative and assignment to a specific location cannot be guaranteed, however, applicants select three examination sites, in order of preference.

After applications have been reviewed and evaluated by the credentials council, eligible candidates receive an electronic notification from the BCNS confirming authorization to sit for the examination.

Formal notification including examination instructions, the assigned testing site location, date, time and proctor contact information is sent via email to all eligible candidates 30 days prior to their examination day.

Candidates will need their government issued identification to be admitted to the testing center on examination day.

Modifications to Examination Administrations
BCNS reserves the right to cancel or change the administrative date(s) or location(s) of the BCNS examination 45 days prior to the examination.

The executive director will notify all confirmed candidates in receipt of an authorization to test letter. Candidates may request a full refund or apply application fees toward an unscheduled or upcoming administration.

BCNS is not responsible for expenses incurred by a candidate due to examination administration modifications.

Cancellation Policy
Requests to cancel testing appointments and/or withdraw applications will be honored up until the published refund deadline (30 days prior to the examination date). Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing.

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 seven days prior to the scheduled examination. After that, previously approved candidates who have not yet taken the examination will be required to re-apply and pay the application fee.

No refunds will be made if the BCNS receives notification after the published refund deadline.
Preparing For the Examination

Examination Content and Format
The BCNS 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.

Tips for Success
- Read the entire Candidate Handbook.
- Familiarize yourself with the BCNS competency statements/content domains.
- Review the list of recommended readings. Review of nutrition textbooks does not constitute an endorsement by the BCNS nor imply a guarantee that candidates will be successful in passing the certification examination.
- Know when and where the test will be given, appear on time with required materials (e.g. valid identification) and be ready to be tested.

The BCNS does not endorse any specific study preparation method or course, nor does it maintain information about them. BCNS strongly recommends candidates use multiple reference materials when studying for the examination.

Language
The BCNS 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 accommodations for candidates with a disability covered by this act. Candidates requiring special accommodations must complete the Request for Special Examination Accommodations form, and Documentation of Disability-Related Needs form before scheduling the examination. These forms must be submitted with the CNS or CNS-S Certification Application to the BCNS. Arrangements for special accommodations may take up to 45 days to coordinate.

Candidates will be contacted by the BCNS to ensure all processes and procedures are explained, and that a testing appointment is scheduled to accommodate their needs accordingly, if feasible.
On Examination Day

Testing Sites
BCNS examinations are administered at testing sites located throughout the Unites States. Testing sites have been selected to provide accessibility to the most candidates in the most controlled, secure and consistent environments possible. To ensure that examination results for all candidates are earned under comparable conditions and represent fair and accurate measurement, test sites meet the following criteria:

- Examination rooms will be quiet and free of disruption
- Rooms will have adequate and comfortable ventilation, lighting and temperature
- All examination administrations will be monitored by approved proctors
- Entrances/exits will be monitored/controlled and working fire exits will be available
- The test site will be ADA compliant
- Candidates will have access to restroom facilities

The BCNS maintains examination administration and security standards that are designed to assure all candidates are provided the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

Examination Procedures
The BCNS proctors and staff adhere to approved procedures to ensure the testing sites meet the BCNS’ testing criteria. Please review the following information prior to the testing date to ensure familiarity with the procedures.

When arriving at the test center, candidates will:

- Arrive approximately 20 minutes prior to the scheduled test administration time. Candidates who arrive more than 15 minutes after the scheduled testing time will not be admitted; additional time will not be given to accommodate late examinees.
- Present a valid form of primary identification.
- Sign a candidate log attesting that they have provided valid identification, agree to keep the contents of the examination confidential and that the BCNS may include names of passing candidates on an online registry.

Individual lockers are not provided for test-takers at the testing sites. A personal belongings storage table will be set up for prohibited items. Valuables should not be brought into testing sites.

Identification Requirements
To be allowed to test, candidates must present a valid form of primary identification at the testing site. Acceptable forms of primary identification (photograph and signature required) include:
• Government-issued driver’s license
• Passport or passport card
• Permanent resident visa
• Military issued identification card

Unacceptable forms of primary identification (photograph and signature required) include, but are not limited to:
• Birth certificates
• Social security cards
• Student IDs
• Employee IDs
• Marriage certificates

All identification must be valid and must be an original document. Candidates will not be admitted to the examination without proper identification. There will be no refund of the examination fee.

Test Site Restrictions and Misconduct
The following actions by candidates during the examination will constitute misconduct and result in an automatic dismissal from the examination, cancellation of scores and forfeiture of examination fees:

• Failure to adhere to testing site examination restrictions
• Creating a disturbance, being abusive or being otherwise uncooperative
• Bringing restricted materials into the testing area
• Using electronic communication equipment such as cellular phones, PDAs or communicating calculators.
• Gaining unauthorized admission into the examination testing area
• Attempting to take the examination for another individual
• Possessing books, notes, or other resources and study aids
• Attempting to remove, or removing scratch paper from the testing site
• Recording or attempting to record examination questions or making notes
• Giving or receiving help, or being suspected of doing so, during or after the examination
• Eating, drinking and smoking
• Prohibited items include but are not limited to: communicating calculators, pagers, cell phones, electronic digital devices (PDAs, watches, etc.), recording or photographic devices, weapons, briefcases, computers or computer bags, and handbags or purses.
• Candidates may NOT discuss test questions, topic areas or scenarios, or possible answers, during or after the test administration, with any other person(s), which includes faculty, other examinees or potential candidates.

Security
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. It should be noted all examination scores may be invalidated in the event of this type 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.

**Cancellation Due to Bad Weather or Other Emergencies**

In the event of bad weather, a natural disaster or another emergency (for example, a test center power outage), proctors will determine whether circumstances warrant cancellation and rescheduling of examinations at a particular test center.

Should examinations at a test center be cancelled, all affected candidates will be contacted by the BCNS executive director about rescheduling their examinations.
After the Examination

Notification of Examination Results
Score reports will be issued via email approximately 6-8 weeks after the examination administration. 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.

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 re-grading fee must be received no later than two months after the test date. Review of examination scores will be processed and mailed approximately four weeks from the receipt of the request. Review of an 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 test may retake it for a $200 reexamination fee. Reexamination requires the completion and submission of the Reexamination Application and a $200 application fee. The BCNS must receive the application and fee no later than two months prior to the examination administration. Candidates may take the examination an unlimited number of times as long as they continue to meet the published eligibility criteria.
Completion of Program Requirements
Candidates who pass the BCNS examination must successfully fulfill all CNS or CNS-S 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 BCNS examination;
- A master’s 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 clinical healthcare (including, but not limited to, MD, DO, DC, DDS, Doctor of Nursing, ND, Pharm.D) from a United States regionally accredited college or university, or its foreign equivalent;
- Met all required minimum coursework (30 semester credit hours);
- Completed 1,000 hours of documented and attested practice experience in nutrition;
- Attested that he/she has 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.

Candidates who have successfully completed the CNS program are sent official notification. This notification serves as authorization for use of the CNS designation after the candidates’ name.

CNS-S Program Completion
The CNS-S credential is conferred and program completion is achieved when the candidate has:

- Successfully passed the BCNS examination;
- A 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 clinical 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 minimum coursework (30 semester credit hours);
- Completed a minimum of three years experience in the nutrition industry, research, academia, writing or clinical practice;
- A minimum of five of any combination of the following:
  - Nutrition papers in peer-reviewed journals or trade journals;
  - Nutrition chapters in textbooks or reference books;
  - Non-professional nutrition books that are based on sufficient scientific research;
  - Nutrition related patents; or
  - Comparable works of scholarship
• Attested that he/she has 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.

Candidates who have successfully completed the CNS-S program are sent official notification. This notification serves as authorization for use of the CNS-S designation after the candidates’ name.

Certificates
Candidates who complete their CNS or CNS-S candidacy will receive a certificate specifying that the CNS or CNS-S designation has been awarded; official certificates will be sent within 10 business days of official notification following a testing period. The candidate’s name will appear on the certificate exactly as requested on the application.

Credential Verification
The BCNS executive director maintains a database of all active certificants.

Employers, potential employers or other agencies may request verification of a certificant or a certificant may request that verification be sent to an employer, potential employer or agency. Certification status for any individual may be verified by contacting the BCNS at Office@NutritionSpecialists.org.

Examination Appeals
Complaints or appeals may be submitted in writing prior to the examination and up until 30 days after examination administration. Written appeals must be submitted with supporting documentation or evidence to the BCNS executive director.

The burden of proof for examination appeals is borne by the applicant. The decision of the board of directors is final. Complaints or appeals will not be considered after the 30 days have expired. Due to the thorough review and analysis of each question during the examination construction procedures, there are no appeal procedures to challenge individual examination questions or answers. Because of the secure nature of these examinations, BCNS will not disclose examination questions prior to, or after, the administration. Candidate responses to particular test questions (correct or not correct) will not be disclosed.
Disciplinary and Complaint 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 or failure to meet of 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 and/or CNS-S certification.
- Fraud, falsification or misrepresentation in an initial application or recertification application for certification.
- Falsification of any material information requested by the BCNS.
- Misrepresentation of CNS and/or CNS-S 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 the 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’s confidentiality policy. Inquiries or submissions other than complaints may be reviewed and processed by the BCNS board or executive director at its discretion.
Upon receipt and preliminary review of a complaint involving the certification program, the executive director, in consultation with the president of the board of directors, may conclude, at his/her sole discretion, the submission:

- Contains unreliable or insufficient information, or
- Is patently frivolous or inconsequential

In such cases, the executive director and board president 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 executive director to its submitter.

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

**Complaint Review**

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

The president 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 review committee will establish the timeline for responses and for providing any additional information. Other members of the board and/or BCNS staff or legal counsel may assist the review committee in the conduct of its investigation. 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 his or her 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 such 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, which 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 upon 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 promulgated 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 is within
their respective discretionary powers. If such an offer is extended, the certificant or candidate at issue must
submit the required written assurance within 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 (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.

Reprimand in the form of a written notice from the board normally can be sent to a certificant or candidate who
has received his or her first substantiated complaint, depending on circumstances. Suspension can be imposed
on a certificant or candidate who has received two substantiated complaints, depending on circumstances. Termination can be imposed on a certificant or candidate who has received two substantiated complaints within a two-year period, or three or more substantiated complaints, depending on circumstances. The board may, at its discretion, 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 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 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 his or her 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 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.
Certification-Recertification

Purpose
The BCNS supports the ongoing professional development of its certificants. 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 nutrition science and nutrition care. Recertification also provides encouragement to, and acknowledgement for, participation in ongoing professional development activities and continued learning. To support this purpose, the recertification requirements require continuing education and professional activities that enhance ongoing professional development, recognize learning opportunities, and provide a process for both attaining and recording professional development achievements.

To ensure the proficiency of CNS and CNS-S certified individuals, the board requires that each CNS and CNS-S 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-year time 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.

To maintain use of the CNS and CNS-S credentials, certification must be renewed every five years. The five year recertification date begins in January of the calendar year following the year the CNS credential is awarded.

Requirements
The BCNS strictly adheres to the standards of maintenance requirements for certification. It is the responsibility of the certificant to comply with all procedures and deadlines in order to maintain their credential.

All certificants renewing their BCNS credential must:

- Earn and record 75 CEUs on the Recording of Earned Continuing Education Credits Form
- Submit the Recertification Application with corresponding fee(s)
- Remit payment of the $200 recertification fee
- Maintain certificates of attendance for two years after submitting the application. May be asked to provide for auditing purposes.
- Sign the candidate responsibility statements

The Recertification Application and the Recording of Earned Continuing Education Credits form is available online at NutritionSpecialists.org
Recertification by Continuing Education Hours
After initial CNS or CNS-S certification is obtained, continuing education hours may be accrued and used for recertification. The continuing education hours must be obtained between the date of initial certification and the date that the certification application is submitted.

Documentation of the continuing education hours must be on the Recording of Earned Continuing Education Credits form. Certificants are required to report (e.g. name of program, name of the program sponsor, date of program, number of CEs, and the location of the event) earned continuing education hours no later than the end of the CE cycle. Continuing education attendance should be listed in chronological order starting from the date of initial certification, or previous recertification, to the present. Continuing education hours must be obtained within the five year reporting cycle. Continuing education hours received before initial certification was earned will not be accepted. Certificates of attendance may be required in order to substantiate the application and should be maintained for a period of two years after the application is submitted.

Qualifying Recertification Activities
1. Participation as a learner in a professional and structured educational activity that is related to nutrition and nutrition care.
   Such activities include, but are not limited to:

   • Attendance at teaching activities offering continuing medical education (CME) or other continuing professional education (CPE) that are recognized by professional organizations, e.g., medicine, pharmacy, nursing, dietetics or other health profession organizations and societies. The nutrition 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.

   • 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.

   • Nutrition courses at a U.S. 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 at 8 CE credits for each semester hour.

   • Other learning activities approved by the BCNS credentials council. The activity must be primarily educational in nature, the presentations of scientific quality, evidence-based, representative of a balanced discussion of the topic, with nutrition content equal to or greater than 50%.

Please note:

• Courses may be taken in person or online.

• 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.
• Documentation of CE will consist of the Recording of Earned Continuing Education Credits form found on the website. Certificates of attendance, transcripts or other evidence of participation may be requested if you are audited or upon request of the credentials council.

2. **Teaching nutrition courses at a U.S. regionally accredited college or university or foreign equivalent institution.** *(A maximum of 50 CE credits can be earned in this category.)*

• 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.

3. **Authoring or co-authoring books and articles in the field of nutrition.** *(A maximum of 50 CE credits can be earned in this category.)*

• Advanced level professional book or textbook *(40 CE credits).*

• Professional review article or book chapter that is published in a peer-reviewed journal or in an advanced professional book *(15 CE credits).*

• Full original research article published in a peer-reviewed journal
  
  o Primary author *(10 CE credits)*
  o Contributing author *(5 CE credits)*

• Abstract of a scientific work or case history published in a peer-reviewed journal
  
  o Primary author *(2 CE credits)*
  o Contributing author *(1 CE credit)*

• Non-professional publication that is peer reviewed or reviewed by the BCNS credentials council and based on rigorous scientific research
  
  o Primary author *(10 CE credits)*
  o Contributing author *(5 CE credits)*

**Please note:**

• Books and papers must be published within the five-year recertification period to which they are applied.

• 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.

4. **Editorship.** *(A maximum of 50 CE credits can be earned in this category)*

• Editor-in-chief of a professional nutrition journal *(25 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 CNE credits)

Please note: Documentation of CE will consist of a letter describing the editorial activity by the submitting CNS.

5. Organizing and chairing or co-chairing a scientific session. (A maximum of 50 CE credits can be earned in this category)
• Organizing and chairing or co-chairing a scientific session at a professional meeting (2 CE credits, if the nutrition content of the activities is equal to or greater than 50%).

• Documentation of organizing and chairing or co-chairing a scientific session will consist of a letter describing the activity, including the sponsor of the activity, subject content and number of CEs offered.

Recertification Application Processing
The BCNS will email candidates a recertification reminder approximately six months prior to their recertification date, however, it is the candidate’s responsibility to be aware of and comply with recertification requirements. The expiration date of the certification cycle is printed on the candidate’s certificate.

At the end of the candidate’s certification cycle, the candidate is required to submit the recertification application, accompanied by supporting documentation (Recording of Earned Continuing Education Credits form) and pay the recertification fee. The recertification application must be postmarked, faxed, or emailed no later than the CNS/CNS-S Certificate expiration date. Candidates should allow four weeks for processing recertification applications.

Incomplete Recertification Applications
Recertification applications are considered incomplete if any of the required information is missing and/or illegible or the corresponding fee is not included.

Candidates will be notified at least once via email that the recertification application is incomplete and what must be done to complete the application. This notice will include a deadline for response.

If the certificant does not respond in a timely manner, notification will be sent to inform the certificant that the recertification application will not be processed. The candidate will be notified of the consequences for failing to recertify.

Annual Fee
For a certificant to ensure that he/she remains in good standing, BCNS requires remittance of a $100 annual fee. The annual fee is due by January 1 of each year, commencing the year after certification is awarded. Certificants may pay this fee online.
Failure to Renew Certification
Renewal is mandatory for all certificants. After a period of five years, or one reporting CE cycle in which a certificant fails to maintain the CNS/CNS-S credential, the certificant’s status is listed as “inactive” for a maximum period of one year.

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

Reinstatement
A certificant must complete the Intent to Reinstatement Application, pay the reinstatement fee of $100 and obtain the required number of CEs in order to reinstate the credential. Candidates recertifying from an inactive status must also complete a recertification application and remit the corresponding fee.

All inactive certificants seeking reinstatement of their BCNS credential must complete and submit the following:

- Intent to Reinstatement Application
- $100 Reinstatement fee
- Recertification Application and fee ($200)
- Recording of Earned Continuing Education Credits Form

Audit Process
The BCNS reserves the right to verify information supplied by, or on behalf of, a certificant. If selected for a review, the certificant will be asked to submit documentation substantiating recertification eligibility. Certificants may randomly be selected for review. An individual selected for review will be required to submit verifiable documentation for each activity listed on the Recording of Earned Continuing Education Credits Form. It is recommended that certificants retain all records for at least five years following the cycle end date.

If credit for any program or activity is denied as a result of the review, the certificant will be given 90 days to report additional hours to resolve the deficiency. The certificant will remain authorized to use the CNS/CNS-S designation during this 90-day period.

If the deficiency is not resolved within the 90-day period, a deficiency notice will be sent. If the deficiency remains unresolved, the individual will no longer be certified and will not be authorized to use the CNS/CNS-S designation.

Renewal Appeals
Appeals regarding renewal eligibility and status must be submitted in writing to the BCNS executive director within 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. Renewal appeals will be reviewed by the BCNS executive director and responded to in writing within 15 business days of the postmarked appeal request letter.

If the executive director cannot resolve the issue, the appeal will be referred to the board of directors. The decision of the board of directors is final.
BCNS Board of Directors Policies

Use of the Credential
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 are authorized to use the following certification mark in communications and marketing materials:

Correct Use:
John Doe is a CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® certificant
John Doe, CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® certificant

Misuse:
ABC employs three CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® professionals

Correct Use:
John and Jane Doe are CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST® certificants.

Misuse:
John and Jane Doe are CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALISTS
The CERTIFIED NUTRITION SPECIALIST’S seminar was sold out.

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

Confidentiality Procedures
BCNS is committed to protecting confidential information related to applicants, candidates and certificants. Confidential materials include, but are not limited to: an individual’s application, application status, personal applicant/certificant information, examination items and answers, examination forms and individual examination scores.

Personal information about a candidate/certificant will only be released to that candidate/certificant if release of the information is authorized in writing by the individual or is required by law. Personal information submitted by applicants/certificants in an application or renewal application is considered confidential. Personal information retained within the applicant/certificant database will be kept confidential.
Examination scores are released only to the examination candidate unless a signed release is provided in writing by the individual or is required by law.

**Release of Information**

The names of certified individuals are not considered confidential and may be published by the BCNS.

Aggregate examination statistics (including the number of examination candidates, pass/fail rates and total number of certificants; never to include item level data) will be made available upon written request (hardcopy or electronic) to the BCNS. Aggregate examination statistics, studies and reports concerning applicants/certificants will contain no information identifiable with any applicant/certificant.

Application status, information about whether or not an individual has taken the examination and score information will not be released. Examination scores are released only to the examination candidate unless a signed release is provided in writing to the BCNS by the individual or is required by law.

**Record Retention**

BCNS retains all examination forms, examination development documents, examination results, examination items, active examination application information and active applicant/candidate/certificant data permanently.
Code of Ethics

Preamble

The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists (BCNS) is a nonprofit credentialing board for nutrition specialists (CNS/CNS-S). 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 Certified Nutrition Specialist-Scholar (CNS-S) is formal recognition for nutrition care professionals who have met rigorous and demanding eligibility requirements, including postgraduate educations, subsequent experience in the nutrition industry, research, academia, writing or clinical practice, and demonstration of authored nutrition papers, texts, research, and patents.

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 BCNS 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/CNS-S that is clinically practicing nutrition care agrees to adhere to the following code of ethics, principles and interpretative guidelines:

- Foremost, do no harm. A CNS/CNS-S 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/CNS-S places service, and the health and welfare of other 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/CNS-S 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/CNS-S employs his/her 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 his or her own determination on such recommendations and assessment. A CNS/CNS-S shall not mislead patients into false or unjustified expectations of favorable results of treatment.

A CNS/CNS-S 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/CNS-S upholds the standards of professionalism and commits to performing his/her 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 will be subject to discipline, including certification revocation (see BCNS Disciplinary and Complaint Policy).

A CNS/CNS-S 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/CNS-S commits to the study, application and advancement of scientific knowledge, continues to seek nutritional and related health education, and makes relevant nutrition science information available to patients/clients, colleagues and the public. They also obtain 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/CNS-S values his or her responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community and the betterment of public health.

A CNS/CNS-S truthfully and accurately states one’s credentials, professional education and experiences. CNS and CNS-S may be used as a post-nominal credential. The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists does not recognize “board-eligible,” and such nomenclature is to be avoided.

A CNS-S that is not clinically practicing nutrition care agrees to adhere to the following code of ethics, principles and interpretative guidelines:

A CNS-S 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-S upholds the standards of professionalism and commits to performing his/her 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-S respects the rights of clients, colleagues and other health professionals, and safeguards 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-S 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 colleagues and the public, obtains consultation and recognizes the talents of other health professionals when indicated.

- A CNS-S values his or her responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community and the betterment of public health.

- A CNS-S truthfully and accurately states one’s credentials, professional education and experiences. CNS-S may be used as a post-nominal credential. The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists does not recognize “board-eligible,” and such nomenclature is to be avoided.