

Three Steps to ABEM Certification

Note: This is the second in a series of articles about ABEM and board certification. Next: I'm certified! What do I need to do to maintain my certification? To read part one of this series, visit: www.aem.org/get-involved/sections/yps/common-sense

There are three steps to ABEM certification:

1. Apply for Certification
2. Pass the Qualifying (Written) Exam
3. Pass the Oral Exam

Application

In mid-April, your program director will receive application information to distribute to residents who are scheduled to graduate, and ABEM makes the online application available to these residents. (This means that you can begin the application process before you graduate from residency, but you must have graduated by November 1 in order to take the written exam).

The normal application period is from mid-April through August; a late application period runs until early October but includes a substantial late fee. The application is straightforward, requesting basic information such as date of birth, contact information, and medical license (if you have one). You are asked to verify the documented training information. Once the application and fee have been submitted, ABEM will process it and verify successful completion of your training.

The Qualifying (Written) Examination

The second step to certification is to take and pass the Qualifying Examination, also known as the "written exam." The normal registration period usually runs from early May through late October, with a late registration period running until early November. The exam is eight

hours long (including breaks) and consists of approximately 305 multiple choice questions. The exam is "criterion referenced," meaning that if you meet a certain standard you will pass (there are no quotas or curves involved in scoring). Once you are registered, you will receive information about how to schedule your exam at a Pearson VUE testing center. ABEM recommends scheduling as soon as possible so that you can take the exam on your preferred date and location during the week-long administration window in November at Pearson VUE testing centers nationwide. If you wait to register, your options can become limited.



The Oral Examination

The final step to becoming certified is taking and passing the Oral Certification Examination. After you pass the Qualifying Examination, you will be randomly assigned to one of the next year's administrations of the Oral Exam (one takes place in the spring and the other in the fall). The exam is a half-day long, consists of seven cases, and is administered near Chicago O'Hare International Airport. You must have a medical license in compliance with ABEM policy in order to take the exam.

Advice About the Certification Process

Apply early to avoid late fees and register for exams in the first period available to you. If you don't register to take the examinations in your first year after residency, you will have to complete additional requirements to maintain your board eligibility. Once you graduate, you have five years of board eligibility to get certified. Research has shown that the earlier you take the exam, the higher your likelihood of passing. More information is available www.abem.org under the "Become Certified" tab. If you have questions, please call 517-332-4800. ●