

Frequently Asked Questions ^[1]

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MSNBC and AMSN

What is the difference between MSNBC and the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses (AMSN)?

MSNBC is the certification arm of AMSN and AMSN is the professional organization arm of MSNBC. AMSN and MSNBC work collaboratively to promote excellence in medical-surgical nursing practice through certification and professional development.

Certification

If I am a few months shy of meeting the eligibility requirements, can I still apply?

You must meet eligibility requirements **at the time of application**. You will need to wait until you have met all 3 eligibility requirements of the exam to apply.

How much time do you recommend I study?

MSNBC does not offer a recommended time as this is an individual preference. Some nurses begin their study preparation 6-12 months prior to taking the exam. Others begin studying when they apply for the exam.

When are the dates for computer-based testing (CBT) testing?

CBT doesn't have specific dates. Each site varies on the number of exams given in a week. You are assigned a 90-day period for testing and an 85-day period for scheduling. When you receive your ATT, you schedule your

exam date and location within the 85 days based on the testing center availability and your personal schedule. MSNCB does not assign a date or location to you.

Where can I take the computer-based testing (CBT) exam in my area?

There are more than 300 Prometric testing centers nationwide. About 3-5 days after applying, you will receive your exam ATT from MSNCB. The ATT will contain further information on how to schedule your date and test centers location in your area. You do not select the date or location of your exam at the time of application and MSNCB does not assign a date or location to you.

Can I take the CMSRN exam overseas?

If you or a spouse is serving in the military, MSNCB provides the exam overseas via CBT Prometric test centers. You will schedule a test center and date online after receiving your ATT.

Can I reschedule my exam?

You can reschedule a computer-based testing (CBT) exam within the same 90-day period at no additional cost if you reschedule *more than* 15 days in advance of your current appointment. If rescheduling between 6-15 days of your current appointment, you will be charged \$25. If you need to reschedule outside of your 90-day period, you will need to cancel your current appointment and apply for a one-time only extension.

Can I get an extension on my computer-based testing (CBT) period?

If you've been assigned a 90-day period and you need more time, you can extend the window one time only (fees apply). FailSafe candidates and those who do not cancel or miss an exam appointment, are deemed ineligible for extensions. [Learn more here](#) ^[3].

What is the Authorization to Test (ATT)?

Approximately 3-5 days after you apply for the exam with MSNCB, your ATT will be emailed to you. The ATT also contains online scheduling information to schedule your exam date, time and location.

Who do I contact if I don't receive my ATT?

If you have not received your ATT within 2 weeks after you apply, MSNCB at 1-866-877-2676 or by email at msncb@msncb.org ^[4] immediately.

I have to cancel my exam. How do I do this?

Cancellations are not accepted for the computer-based testing exam. If you miss your exam date, your application payment will be forfeited. For FailSafe candidates, a missed appointment will serve as one attempt to test.

MSNCB understands that emergencies happen. If an emergency occurs which prevents you from testing, you may submit an email to msncb@msncb.org ^[4] to request a review of the circumstances. Supporting documentation of the emergency must be provided. Each request will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If your cancellation is accepted, you may be refunded the application payment minus the processing fee.

Is the exam offered in a paper and pencil format?

Due to a significant decrease in paper-pencil exam registrations, the exams are only offered via the computer-based testing (CBT) format.

Are contact hours awarded for the certification when I pass the exam?

Contact hours are **not** awarded for passing the certification exams. Various study resources may offer contact hours and is determined by the resource provider.

Do I need to have a BSN to take the exam?

No, there is no academic criteria required for the exams. You do not need a BSN.

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CMSRN Exam

What's better - ANCC's or the CMSRN credential?

The CMSRN exam and ANCC's exam are both targeted for medical-surgical nurses and equal in status. Both programs are accredited, both are recognized for Magnet status and both are well known in the nursing community.

The CMSRN certification is endorsed by the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses, the membership organization representing the specialty of medical-surgical nursing. Also, the CMSRN is more affordable and doesn't require contact hours to sit for the exam. For an in-depth look at the differences, [view this chart](#) [5].

Is the CMSRN certification accredited by ANCC?

ANCC does not approve or accredit certification examinations. ANCC is one of about 40 certification boards that offer certification examinations in various nursing specialties. All certification boards offer nationally standardized examinations that are prepared using accepted testing standards.

Many certification boards are members of the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS), the "board of boards." MSNCB has been a member of ABNS since 2004. The CMSRN certification has been accredited by the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC), the accredited branch of ABNS, since January 2009.

Many nurses are certified by boards other than ANCC, such as AACN Certification Corporation for critical care nursing, BCEN for emergency nursing, ONCC for oncology nursing and NCC for women's health nursing.

Is the CMSRN credential recognized by the Magnet Recognition Program?

The Magnet Recognition Program recognizes the CMSRN credential in the Magnet application. Contact Magnet directly (magnet@ana.org [6]) if your hospital will not recognize the CMSRN credential.

What if I am already a med-surg certified nurse?

If you are already certified in med-surg by ANCC, you can bypass taking the exam when you are in the last year of your current med-surg certification. Review the eligibility requirements for [Exam Exemption](#) [7], and then apply using the Exam Exemption Application. You may apply thirty (30) days prior to the current certification expiration date, or up to one (1) year after the expiration date with a late fee.

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General Recertification

How long will it take for my self-reported contact hours to be verified?

Contact hours are manually reviewed and verified. Allow up to 10 business days for your Tracker to be verified after contact hours are entered.

What is the Tracker?

The Tracker is your online resource for planning, tracking and applying for recertification. It shows your certification information, how close you are to recertifying, and the contact hours counting toward your recertification.

You can also print your certification wallet card, apply for recertification as well as submitting your application payment online right from your Tracker.

When do I need to submit my recertification application?

Your recertification application due date is at least 30 days prior to your certification expiration date to avoid a late fee. You are eligible for recertification as early as one year before your expiration date, and up to one year after this time (with a late fee).

Where can I find the recertification application?

When your 90 contact hours have been entered and verified, you've entered the required employment information and you are within the application time frame, the online application, along with the payment screen, can be accessed right from your Tracker.

How far back can I claim contact hours?

You can include any contact hours beginning from January of the year you were initially certified, or from your most recent recertification start date.

Does my academic education count for contact hours?

Biopsychosocial academic courses earned towards a baccalaureate, masters, or doctoral degree program will count towards a maximum of 75 contact hours. You only need to report the courses you are counting. Do not report general education courses. An unofficial copy of a transcript must be submitted via mail, fax or email in order to be considered.

How do I know if my contact hours are from an approved provider?

When it states that the contact hours must be from an approved provider, it doesn't mean MSNCB must approve each provider. Any organization providing continuing nursing education must seek approval to provide it (to make sure you as a nurse are receiving quality education). There are hundreds of approvers. An organization will always be able to tell you if it has been approved to provide the contact hours. There is also a statement on the certificate you receive stating the organization is an approved provider.

Can contact hours provided by my facility or hospital count?

If your facility/hospital is accredited as an approved provider, you can claim the contact hours.

How do I know if my contact hours are categorized as the specialty/practice or as professional development?

There are several ways to determine if the content of your contact hours is your designated specialty or professional development. If the topic is also covered on the certification exam's blueprint, the activity is acceptable for the specialty/practice. The CMSRN exam's [blueprint](#) [8] can serve as a guideline for what is

considered med-surg, and the CCCTM exam's [blueprint](#) [9] can guide you in what is considered care coordination.

Topics like nursing theory, leadership, research and hospital administration would be considered professional development. General nursing topics are also considered professional development.

Can I receive credit for the certification review course I completed before taking the exam?

Yes, for your first recertification, provided you took the course the year you certified. For initial recertification, you can claim any contact hours, including additional review courses you attended, beginning from January of the year you were certified.

Do you want copies of my contact hour certificates?

No, we do not initially need copies of your certificates. If your application is selected for audit, copies of your certificates will be requested at that time.

I have more than the required 90 contact hours. Should I submit all of them?

You may list more than the required 90 contact hours, but we recommend submitting no more than 100 contact hours.

Do all contact hours have to be awarded through AMSN or AACN?

No. Education programs must be presented by an individual, state or national organization accredited as a provider of continuing education in nursing. Education programs may be in any format including, but not limited to, courses, workshops and independent study.

AMSN and AACN are excellent resources for educational programs through their annual conventions, official publications and online libraries. These publications offer contact hours through continuing education articles for independent study in each issue.

What if I do not have enough contact hours to recertify by continuing education?

You can still recertify by taking the CMSRN exam again. Standard exam fees apply. CCCTM recertification is by contact hours only.

Do I have to wait until my med-surg certification through ANCC expires to apply for the CMSRN exam through Exam Exemption?

You may apply for exam exemption 30 days prior to the current certification expiration date, or up to one (1) year after the expiration date with a late fee.

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Recertification – Tracker

What is the Tracker?

The Tracker is your online resource for planning, tracking and applying for recertification. It shows your certification information, how close you are to recertifying, and the contact hours counting toward your recertification.

You can also print your certification wallet card and apply for recertification online right from your Tracker.

My contact hours aren't verified yet. Why?

Each contact hour activity is reviewed by recertification staff. Review may take up to 10 days.

Activities marked "Pending" indicate that they were reviewed by staff and more information is needed before verification. Academic hours require an unofficial transcript before verification. Preceptor hours require a completed preceptor form before verification. The documents can be [faxed, mailed, or emailed](#). [10] Please address the documents to MSNCB.

Where is the preceptor form?

Preceptor hours require a completed preceptor form before verification.

CMSRN: [Download the form](#)  [11]

CCCTM: [Download the form](#)  [12]

I filled out employer information, but it's still saying I need to add more.

Underneath the Provide Employer Info button, missing fields of information are listed in red text. Enter the appropriate information. If all the fields are completed and current, you may need to refresh. Click F5 on your keyboard or exit the Tracker tool by closing the window, then opening the Tracker tool again. If you are still experiencing difficulties, you can [contact us](#) [13] for assistance.

How do I know which activity is being counted?

Entries highlighted in purple are applicable to your current certification period. These contact hour activities have been verified by recertification staff and are within the correct time frame.

How come my category type changed to Professional Development (PROFDEV)?

Recertification staff review and verify each contact hour activity. Activities with topics that cover the broad area of health care and general nursing are categorized as professional development. Staff adjust the category before verifying the activity.

I can't see all my contact hour activities.

Above the Certification Contact Hours Earned list, you can choose how many entries to see per page. You can navigate to more pages from the bottom right corner of the list.

If you haven't found what you're looking for, you can also contact us at msncb@msncb.org [4] or 866-877-2676 for assistance.

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adroll_adv_id = "KWZZ7FFQSVGWDMODYXO6JX"; adroll_pix_id = "NCYFL3REJZDHNKAGK62TFC";
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Affiliate Organizations

- [Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses \(AMSN\)](#)
- [American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing \(AAACN\)](#)

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