



Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation

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ONCC Statement on Continued Competency

Core Principle: The purpose of ONCC's recertification program is for ONCC Certified nurses to demonstrate continued competency by practicing in their specialty and enhancing their knowledge following initial certification. Recertification seeks to assure the public that certified nurses have maintained a current level of knowledge in the specialty represented by their credential and requires certified nurses to continue those activities essential to the maintenance of knowledge required for their level of practice and certification in the specialty.

Measuring competency and continued competency in a nursing specialty is an ongoing challenge for all credentialing boards. The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) defines continuing competence as “demonstrating specified levels of knowledge, skills, or ability not only at the time of initial certification but throughout an individual’s professional career.” ONCC subscribes to this definition and believes that ONCC Certified nurses should demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities throughout the tenure of their certification, first by passing the certification examination and every four years thereafter by meeting the requirements of one of three recertification options. The purpose of the ONCC’s recertification program is consistent with the NCCA definition in that it requires certified nurses to continue those activities essential to the maintenance of knowledge required for their level of practice and certification in the specialty.

Since the inception of the first OCN® examination in 1986, the ONCC Board of Directors has considered the measurement of continuing competency a priority. A task force of the ONCC Board of Directors, convened in 1989, conducted an extensive review of certification renewal practices of various subspecialties in nursing, medicine, and other health related professions. Based on this review, and an assessment of the development of new knowledge in the specialty of oncology, the ONCC Board determined that certification should be renewed every four years. In 2017, the ONCC Board of Directors again convened a task force to review the rationale for the time period for valid certification. The task force reviewed the current literature on the doubling time of medical knowledge, the frequency of publications of new editions of oncology nursing text books, the timeframes for updating online oncology education, and the recertification intervals for other specialty nursing certifications. The ONCC Board of Directors approved the task force’s recommendation that the time interval for recertification remain at four years for all ONCC Certifications. The findings of the task force also resulted in board approval to increase the frequency of role delineation studies from five to four years.

For the first decade of ONCC certification renewal, the Board of Directors required that, in addition to having a required minimum number of practice hours (1,000), candidates pass a written examination every four years to renew certification. Because examinations can be anxiety-provoking, candidates consistently requested an alternate renewal method. In response to this concern, and following extensive research, debate, and discussion, the decision was made

by the Board of Directors to offer renewal of certification through the accrual of points in various professional areas. Beginning in 2000, the ONCC put in place a system for renewal of certification wherein certified nurses submit documentation that they have accrued a minimum number of points through professional development activities during a specified period.

In 2011, as part of the Board's ongoing efforts to ensure continued competency of ONCC-credentialed nurses, a task force was convened to review current evidence related to the measurement of continuing competency in healthcare. The group recommended that ONCC pursue the development of an option for recertification wherein the certified nurse would be required to complete an individual learning needs assessment near the beginning of their certification renewal cycle and complete professional development activities only in the content areas in which they were deficient on the assessment. Based on this recommendation, the Board approved implementation of the Individual Learning Needs Assessment (ILNA) as an option for recertification beginning in 2016. ILNA is based on a model the Citizen Advocacy Center recommends to "enable clinicians to practice safe quality care and to support their effort as life-long learners."

The ONCC Board continues to keep abreast of new developments in methods to assess continued competency. Maintaining the integrity and legal defensibility of the credentials offered by ONCC while meeting the needs of the certified nurses remain priorities of the ONCC.