

# ASSISTANT CANDIDATE GUIDE



Eligibility Requirements  
Application Process  
Exam Content

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# Who We Are

Established in 1948 as a not-for profit organization, the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics, Inc., commonly known as ABC, is a national certifying and accrediting body for the orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic professions. ABC has become the quality standard in orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic certification.

ABC certified individuals are considered leaders in the profession and provide the highest quality patient care, along with excellence in research and device design. ABC certified individuals must meet stringent educational standards, clinical training and a complete assessment of competency.

ABC conducts examinations to test the competency of those persons engaging in supervised orthotic and prosthetic services.

## MISSION AND VISION

ABC is the comprehensive credentialing organization whose mission is to establish and advocate for the highest patient care and organizational standards in the provision of safe and effective orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic services.

ABC fulfills this mission by:

- Measuring patient care provider's knowledge and skills through rigorous credentialing programs
- Establishing standards of organizational performance through facility accreditation
- Mandating professional continuing education to maintain competency
- Administering a professional discipline program
- Communicating the value and importance of ABC credentials.

ABC's activities are guided by the following vision statement:

**Setting Standards, Improving Outcomes, Changing Lives.**

## RECOGNITION

ABC certification is recognized by federal and state agencies, as well as third-party payers and is considered the standard among orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic professionals. ABC certified practitioners are valuable members of the rehabilitation provider community.

## GOVERNANCE OF ABC

The affairs of ABC are governed by the board of directors. Therefore, the board is responsible for the policies and procedures governing certification, and the board has the authority under its bylaws to modify the rules, regulations and policies as it deems appropriate. The board is comprised of ABC credential holders and public representatives.

# Orthotic and Prosthetic Assistants

Assistant certification in orthotics and/or prosthetics is awarded as an attestation of competency for the public, those who require orthotic and/ or prosthetic services and those in other health professions. The awarding of ABC certification provides you with an appropriate and meaningful recognition of professional competence.

## PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS

Completion of our rigorous requirements and exams is confirmation that you have the education, knowledge, experience and skills required of an ABC Certified Orthotic Assistant (COA) or Certified Prosthetic Assistant (CPA).

The credential of Certified Prosthetic and Orthotic Assistant (CPOA) is awarded when you have successfully fulfilled all the requirements of both an orthotic and prosthetic assistant.

## PROPRIETARY OWNERSHIP OF ABC CREDENTIALS

Certification is a privilege, not a right. The ABC Board of Directors maintains legal authority to award its certification credentials and may withhold, suspend or revoke any certification credential in accordance with the established policies, rules and regulations.

# Scope of Practice

According to the [Orthotic, Prosthetic, and Pedorthic Scope of Practice](#), an ABC Certified Assistant is an individual educated and trained to participate in comprehensive orthotic and/or prosthetic care while under the supervision of an ABC certified orthotist and/or ABC certified prosthetist. Certified assistants may perform orthotic and/or prosthetic procedures and related tasks in the management of patient care. ABC certified assistants may not use their credentials as independent providers of patient care.

ABC credentialed individuals must adhere to the ABC Scope of Practice for their credential and/or the scope of practice for any relevant related licensure they hold.

# Code of Professional Responsibility

ABC established the Professional Ethics Program to promote and maintain the highest standards of patient care and ethical behavior. The ABC [Code of Professional Responsibility](#) is recognized throughout the profession as embodying the principles that govern the professional, ethical and moral integrity of individuals and organizations engaged in the delivery of orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic care.

The fundamental objectives of the Professional Ethics Committee are to enforce the *Code*. The committee ensures that any person, facility or organization who may apply, has applied or has been awarded any of the certifications or accreditations offered by ABC are practicing in accordance with professional and community standards. The *Code* and the committee serve to protect the public against unprofessional and unethical conduct by credential holders.

You are expected to abide by the *Code* as an ABC exam applicant and candidate and as a credentialed individual.

# Certification Eligibility Requirements

There are three pathways to certification:

## EDUCATION PATHWAY

- **Pathway 1**

You must successfully complete a Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)/National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE) approved [assistant education program](#).

## CLINICAL EXPERIENCE PATHWAYS

There are two experience pathways for eligibility. For either, you must have a high school diploma, GED certificate or college degree and complete three semester hours each of the following courses. Each course must be from a regionally accredited institution of higher learning.

- Human Anatomy
- Medical Terminology
- General/Fundamental Physics

## FOREIGN EDUCATION

If you have received your education outside the U.S., you must have your education evaluated by the [World Education Services \(WES\)](#). WES is a professional education evaluation service that confirms foreign education programs' equivalence to a high school diploma.

- **Pathway 2**

For single discipline certification 1900 hours (12 months) of clinical experience under Direct Supervision of a certified/licensed orthotist or prosthetist.

For dual discipline certification 2900 hours (18 months) of clinical experience in both orthotics and prosthetics, with a minimum of six months in each discipline.

- **Pathway 3**

For those who currently hold a nationally recognized license/certification in a related allied health profession (e.g., Medical Assistant, Athletic Trainer, Physical Therapist/PTA, Occupational Therapist/OTA)

For single discipline certification 500 hours of supervised patient care.

For dual discipline certification 1,000 hours of supervised patient care experience, with a minimum of 250 in each discipline.

The patient care experience requirement serves as the clinical training portion of the assistant education. It is optimal if your experience is fulfilled after completion of your education courses; however, you can use patient care experience gained prior to the completion of your education courses.

ABC encourages you to use the [Assistant Exam Candidate Self-Assessment Checklists](#) to guide you through your work experience and to ensure that you are getting the type and amount of experience in each area that the profession expects.

## EXTENSION OF CREDENTIAL (CPOA)

If you are seeking to extend your credential to CPOA (certification in the second discipline), you must meet the education and experience requirements in effect when you apply for the second discipline. Additionally, you must be in good standing with your primary certification. **No exceptions will be made.**

# Application Process and Policies

## SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION

Applications must be submitted at ABCop.org. All requirements must be completed by the application deadline for your desired exam cycle.

You must attempt the exam within one calendar year from the date your application is approved. Failure to attempt the exam within that period will cause the application to expire and a new application must be submitted.

## FEES

Payment is required when you apply. ABC accepts electronic payments in the form of either a debit or credit card or Automated Clearing House (ACH). The fees are:

- The non-refundable application fee\*
- The exam fee

\*A non-refundable application fee is required for each discipline. You will need to submit a separate application fee when applying for your second discipline.

## ELIGIBILITY PERIOD

You will be assigned the status of *Exam Candidate* when your application has been reviewed and approved. You will then be granted a three-year eligibility period in which to take and pass your exams. ABC grants you four attempts to pass the exam within your eligibility period.

## TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

It is ABC's policy to administer certification exams in a manner that does not discriminate against an otherwise qualified applicant. ABC offers reasonable and appropriate accommodations for the exams for persons with documented disabilities, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

If you require any accommodations, submit your requests by the application deadline of your desired exam session to provide adequate time to resolve any documentation or exam logistical issues that may arise. ABC will review each request on an individual basis and make decisions for appropriate accommodations based on specific guidelines.

The [Testing Accommodations Policy](#) and the [Testing Accommodations Application](#) should be referenced for additional specific information.

## CRIMINAL HISTORY DISCLOSURE

Health care providers are placed in a position of trust with their patients. Often these providers have unsupervised physical contact with their patients. You must disclose criminal history information if you have been convicted by a court of competent jurisdiction, pleaded nolo contendere, or are currently under indictment, for a felony or any crime involving moral turpitude.

You must submit a signed written statement and full explanation along with supporting documents to accompany the application. Examples of supporting documents may include, but are not limited to, official court documents, probation documents, police reports, etc.

## AUTHORITY

ABC reserves the right to ask you to furnish information or make inquiries as may be deemed appropriate to identify the nature and extent of your education, experience, competency and moral character.

## NOTIFICATION OF APPLICATION DECISION

You will be notified by email of your application approval or denial within the four weeks following the application deadline. You can check your [My ABC](#) account to view the status of your application.

## ADDRESS CHANGES

The email address provided on the application will be used for emailing your letter of eligibility, registration information, exam confirmation and results. You are responsible for updating your information immediately on your [My ABC](#) account.

## FALSIFICATION

If ABC discovers that you have falsified *any* information on your application, any or all of the following actions may be taken:

- Rejection of your application
- Barring you from the exam(s)
- Revocation of any existing ABC certification or status
- Referring of the incident to the Professional Ethics Committee
- Any act of falsification shall be made a part of your permanent record

## APPLICANT INELIGIBILITY

You may be determined ineligible for any of the following reasons:

- Insufficient documentation to assess your eligibility
- Documentation provided does not meet eligibility requirements
- Lack of required fees
- Failure to meet posted deadlines for documentation

If it is determined that the information you provided is inadequate to assess eligibility, you will be notified and given a deadline to respond with the necessary documentation. If documents are not received by the given deadline, your application will be deferred, one time, to the next exam cycle. Failure to complete your application after one deferral will terminate your application, and a new application and application fee will be required.

## APPLICATION APPEALS

If you have been denied on the basis that you have failed to demonstrate the minimal eligibility requirements, you may appeal the denial. Your appeal must be submitted in writing to the ABC Board of Directors.

Appeals must:

- Be in writing, contain your signature and sent to ABC via fax or email to ABC
- State the specific reasons for your appeal
- Include evidence or other pertinent information refuting ABC's original findings
- Be sent no later than 30 calendar days after the date of the notification letter

## APPEALS DECISION

You will receive notification of the decision within 60 days of receipt of the request. The Board of Directors' decision is final.

## STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

ABC does not discriminate on any basis that would constitute illegal discrimination under federal law.

## RE-EXAMINATION

If you fail the exam, you must re-register at [ABCOP.org](http://ABCOP.org) by the application deadline for the desired exam session. You must be within your current eligibility period and have not exhausted your allotted four attempts at the exam.

## REAPPLYING FOR ELIGIBILITY

If you have exhausted your eligibility period, you may reapply for eligibility by submitting a new application, subject to the prevailing *Candidate Guide*, and a new application fee.

# Documentation

## EDUCATION

You will be required to submit a copy of:

- your high school diploma, GED certificate and/or official transcript is required when you submit your application.
- an official transcript documenting three semester hours each of the following courses:
  - Human Anatomy
  - Medical Terminology
  - General/Fundamental Physics

If you are extending your credential, your previous file will be referenced if you apply within seven years following the expiration of your original eligibility period.

These documents must be uploaded to the online application dashboard or can be faxed or emailed directly to ABC.

## COMPETENCY ATTESTATION FORM

You must also submit an [\*Assistant Competency Attestation\*](#) form verifying that you have obtained the necessary knowledge and skills needed to perform the functions of an orthotic or prosthetic assistant. The clinical experience required to meet the eligibility requirements are documented in the attestation form. If you do not possess a particular knowledge or skill, your attester/supervisor should work with you to gain that knowledge prior to completing the attestation form. The form must be completed and signed by either an ABC Certified Prosthetist Orthotist (CPO) or an ABC Certified Orthotist (CO) in the discipline in which you are seeking certification.

# Exam Policies and Information

## CONFIRMATION OF EXAM DATES/ LOCATIONS

You will receive an Authorization-to-Test (ATT) letter by email from ABC, which provides information about scheduling your exam. You will have the option to take the exam at a testing center location or online with a live remote proctor.

## EXAM ADMITTANCE

You must arrive at your assigned testing location or remote proctored appointment at least 30 minutes prior to your scheduled exam time and present your valid photo ID. If you are late, you will not be able to test.

**No exceptions will be made.**

You are required to show one current form of identification, which must be an unexpired government-issued photo identification document with signature (e.g., driver's license or passport). The name on the identification document must match the name on the ATT letter. You will not be permitted to test without the required identification. **No exceptions will be made.**

## CANCELLATION/REFUND POLICIES

ABC understands that circumstances may occur that may cause you to have to cancel your upcoming exam. If you are unable to take the exam that you registered for, you must notify ABC immediately. Cancellations are effective the date they are received.

Cancellations received 31 days or more prior to your scheduled exam date will be eligible for a refund or deferral of your exam fee(s).

There will be a cancellation fee if we are notified less than 30 days prior to your scheduled exam. Cancellations made within five (5) days of the scheduled exam date will result in forfeiture of your exam fee.



Cancellations should be carefully considered. Please reference your ATT letter for a full explanation of our testing service's cancellation and/or rescheduling policy.

Please note: If you fail to schedule an appointment with our testing service for your registered exam session, you will forfeit the exam fee(s). Your eligibility period will not be extended.

## REMOTE PROCTORED EXAMS

If choosing a remote proctored exam, you will provide a computer with a camera, microphone, a reliable internet connection and a private room with a cleared desk. You are assuming responsibility for any interruptions that may void your exam. We recommend using your own personal computer and not a company computer.

## TEST CENTER CLOSINGS

If a testing center must close, affecting your scheduled test date, every effort will be made to provide you with options that may include:

- having your exam rescheduled to an alternate date a full refund of your exam fees
- deferment of your exam to the next exam session.

## HAZARDOUS WEATHER

If you are unable to travel to your testing center due to hazardous weather, you must notify ABC immediately at [certification@abcop.org](mailto:certification@abcop.org) to be eligible for a refund or rescheduling options.

## MISCONDUCT DURING EXAMS

The following activities are prohibited:

- Failure to observe any of the rules of conduct as outlined by the test proctor
- Copy in writing or otherwise record or transmit to others any exam questions or answers or other aspects of the nature or content of the exam
- Bringing any answering agent of any nature (i.e., books, notes, electronic devices) to the exam
- Offer, assist or solicit assistance from other candidates, examiners or those responsible for the administration of the exam

- Engage in any other conduct or inappropriate behavior that is injurious to the integrity of the exam or to any of its participants
- Engage in any other conduct or inappropriate behavior that is injurious to the integrity of the exam or to any of its participants

## DISMISSAL POLICIES

If you are observed engaging in any of the above activities, you will be dismissed from the exam and forfeit your exam fee. You may also be barred from future exams, and your period of eligibility may be affected.

Misconduct during exams will be referred to ABC's Professional Ethics Committee for review and determination of a possible ethical violation.

## LANGUAGE

The exam is offered in English only. No translators or translation devices will be allowed during the exam.

## CANDIDATE INFORMATION CONFIDENTIALITY

ABC is committed to protecting the confidentiality of your records and has policies to ensure your privacy. Information about your exam results is not released to any third party, other than state licensure boards, if required, in response to a valid subpoena, or by your request.

## DATA COMPILATION

ABC may develop and publish statistical data regarding the exams; however, your identity will not be divulged.

# Exam Scoring and Reporting

## EXAM RESULTS

A pass/fail exam result will be displayed immediately upon completion of your exam. In addition, within 24 hours, ABC will notify you that your scores are available on your My ABC account.

## EXAM REVIEW POLICY

If a candidate in their initial eligibility period fails an exam three times, they may request a review of their most recent exam attempt. This review will provide additional information concerning the content areas in which the candidate is not performing well. In order to qualify for this exam review, the following criteria must be met:

- The candidate must submit a written request to [certification@abcop.org](mailto:certification@abcop.org).
- The candidate's third exam attempt score was within 5 percent of the passing score.
- The candidate is still within their eligibility period and has registered for their fourth exam attempt.

Please be advised that processing exam reviews can take up to four weeks.

## RELEASE OF EXAM INFORMATION

The nature, format, content and results of exams administered by ABC are considered privileged information. Due to the importance of test security and item banking, neither test questions nor answer keys will be disclosed or made available for review by candidates or any other unauthorized third party.

## SCORING PROCEDURES

All scoring procedures and responses to exam questions are conducted and verified by ABC's testing service. The passing score for the exam has been recommended by a geographically diverse panel of practicing certified assistants with both clinical and educational backgrounds individually selected by the ABC board of directors. This panel, under the guidance of testing experts from ABC's testing service, computes a passing score representing

the minimum level of knowledge that must be demonstrated to pass the exam. All exams are administered and scored by a computer-based system.

## EXAM INCIDENT REVIEW & APPEALS

You may not appeal a failing score on any exam. However, you may request a review a particular incident or administrative procedure in relation to an exam.

You may request a review of a specific incident or procedure relative to the exam process or administration procedure if you believe the incident or procedure impeded your opportunity for successful completion of your exam.

The following actions must be taken prior to submitting a written request for review:

- File a *Center Procedure Report* with the Test Center Administrator before leaving the testing center
- Contact ABC's testing service by email or phone within 24 hours after the incident occurred and provide the case summary or ticket number, if applicable

The written request for review must be:

- Submitted to ABC within five days of the exam date
- Accompanied by a description of the incident or administrative procedure including any relevant evidence or other pertinent information
- Accompanied by the case summary or ticket number, if applicable

## INCIDENT REVIEW RESOLUTION

If a request for review is submitted concerning an incident or administrative procedure, you will receive notification of the outcome within 30 days of receipt of the request. Should you not be satisfied with the decision rendered, you may submit a written appeal to the board of directors within 14 days. You will be notified of the board's decision within 60 days of receipt of the request. The board of directors' decision is final.

# The Exams

Each exam is designed to evaluate your knowledge and clinical competencies in orthotics and prosthetics. The exams and the passing scores are reviewed and revised biennially.

## EXAM DESCRIPTIONS

Each three-hour, multiple-choice exam consists of 165 items designed to measure your knowledge of patient and practice management. Knowledge assessed on the exam includes: anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, kinesiology, disease process, pathologies, material science, ethics and professionalism.

## EXAM FORMAT

The exam is administered by computer-based testing (CBT). CBT is a method of administering tests in which the responses are electronically recorded.

## EXAM AVAILABILITY

The exam is offered bi-monthly at more than 350 locations around the country. Exam sessions, deadlines and locations are available at [ABCop.org](http://ABCop.org).

## EXAM CONTENT

The development of valid exams begins with a [practice analysis](#), which gives a clear and concise definition of the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for safe and effective clinical practice. Subject matter experts have identified the critical aspects of the assistant profession using a process that includes interviews, surveys, observation and group discussions.

ABC conducts practice analyses that identify performance domains for assistants. Within each performance domain, several identified tasks provide the basis for questions in the exams. Practice analyses also identify associated knowledge and skills related to delivery of orthotic and/or prosthetic care.

## EXAM DEVELOPMENT

ABC updates the examinations on a regular basis with questions written by active assistants. Item development

activities are conducted as needed to ensure that an adequate supply of new questions is available for the ABC exams.

## EXAM PREPARATION

ABC has exam preparation resources available at [ABCop.org](http://ABCop.org) as you prepare to sit for your ABC assistant certification exam. These include the [Practice Analysis](#), [Test Content Outline](#), [Self-Assessment Checklist](#) and [sample exam questions](#). ABC encourages you to review these documents in preparation for your exams.

# Initial Certification

After successfully completing the certification exam, in approximately four weeks you will receive a congratulatory letter, a certificate, a certification number, a lapel pin, an email to claim your digital badge, the ABC [Guide to Maintaining Your Certification](#) and information regarding the proper use of the ABC credential and logo. You will also receive an invoice for the current year's certification fees at a prorated amount.

Certified technicians in good standing will receive the *O&P Almanac*, *Mark of Merit* newsletter, and be listed in the ABC online directory. A directory of all ABC credentialed individuals and organizations is maintained online and available at [ABCop.org](http://ABCop.org).

# Maintaining Certification

You are required to maintain certification by paying annual renewal fees, participating in ABC's Continuing Education Program and adhere to the [Code of Professional Responsibility](#). Your certification will be renewed at the end of a five-year cycle if the minimum number of required continuing education credits have been earned; the requirements can be found in ABC [Guide to Maintaining Your Certification](#).

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