



Certification Policies

For Certificants and Candidates

Presented by:





Policies

All information is subject to change without notice.
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Policies outlined here are those most relevant to CMSRN candidates and certificants. They are not the only MSNCB policies.

All operational policies are in the CMSRN Certification Handbook.

Policies are paraphrased for ease of use. For full policy language, contact us.



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200 Policies: Ethics, Quality and Accountability

Confidentiality of Exam Materials and Client Information

Policy Category	Ethics, Quality & Accountability
Policy Number	ETH-203
Policy Title	Confidentiality & Security of Examination Materials & Client Information Policy

All MSNCB materials, including the examination, are the intellectual property of MSNCB. Information must be kept confidential and not disclosed at any time and under any circumstances, other than as directed by MSNCB.

MSNCB shall ensure confidentiality of examination materials, and applicant and certificant information. The following are considered confidential by MSNCB and our test administrator and will not be released:

1. Examination questions in the item bank.
2. All copies of any Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board Examination.
3. All individual test scores of Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board Examination candidates.
4. Personal information of applicants/candidates and certificants.
5. Psychometric reports related to the performance of the examinations.

Examination Materials

1. Any confidential information related to any MSNCB certification program will not be disclosed or cause to be disclosed to anyone outside of MSNCB, its committees and task forces, and/or management staff, unless otherwise expressly directed by MSNCB in writing.
2. MSNCB will ensure that the testing administrator has a process for security of examination materials and applicant/certificant information; proctor hiring, training, and monitoring; admission and seating of candidates; and measures employed by computer testing center staff. Refer to test administrator security procedures.

Client Information

1. All information provided to MSNCB by examinees, certificants, and subject matter experts will be used only for MSNCB business. Individual contact information will not be released without express written permission of the individual.
2. The certification status of an individual will be provided to employers and certificants upon written consent of the individual.
3. The confidential records of applicants, candidates, or certificants are maintained in a secure database and updated by the individual or automatically. MSNCB staff are the only individuals who have access to update a candidate record. Staff maintain passwords to access the database.



Impartiality Regarding Education & Training

Policy Category	Ethics, Quality & Accountability
Policy Number	ETH-207
Policy Title	Impartiality Regarding Education & Training Policy

MSNCB's role is in developing and administering certification examinations to determine the qualifications of candidates for certification. MSNCB does not require, provide, accredit, or endorse any specific study guides, training or review courses, or other examination preparation products.

The MSNCB Board, certification staff, committee members, and certification subject matter experts who participate in the CMSRN® exam development do not have involvement in the creation, accreditation, approval, endorsement or delivery of examination review courses, educational programs, or training programs that prepare candidates for the certification examination.

Practice exams are not required for certification. Individuals who are involved in the development of items for active exam forms may not also write items for the practice exams. Retired items may be used for practice exams, or a separate group of SMEs may write practice test items.



Applicant and Candidate Records

Policy Category	Ethics, Quality & Accountability
Policy Number	ETH-208
Policy Title	Retention and Security of Applicant and Candidate Records Policy

MSNCB and the MANAGEMENT COMPANY

MSNCB, through the management company, will retain electronic records of all active certificants permanently. MSNCB will retain electronic records of inactive certificants for certification for a period of six (6) years. Records that are no longer required, or have satisfied their required periods of retention, will be destroyed.

Candidate information maintained will include, but is not limited to:

- Last four digits of Social Security number
- Full name
- RN license number, expiration date and state
- Home address
- Home phone number
- Email address
- Employer name and address
- Supervisor's name and contact information (email or phone)

The management company maintains electronic security by using passwords and access levels for employees. Access for each employee will be limited to that necessary to fulfill their assigned responsibilities. Paper copies are maintained in a locked area within a secure area.

A Statement of Understanding will be on all examination applications for applicants to sign and date. It will state, in part:

"... I further understand that the information accrued in the certification process may be used for statistical purposes and for evaluation of the certification program. I understand that the information from my certification records shall be held in confidence and shall not be used for any other purpose without my permission. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this application is true, complete, correct, and is made in good faith. I understand that MSNCB reserves the right to verify any or all information on the application."



Ethics Committee

Policy Category	Ethics, Quality & Accountability
Policy Number	ETH-209
Policy Title	AMSN-MSNCB Ethics Committee Policy

PURPOSE

The Ethics Committee Policy maintains and enforces standards of professional conduct and ethics within MSNCB and for individuals certified from MSNCB. Recommendations regarding an individual's certification will be considered by the MSNCB Board of Directors.

SCOPE

The committee will review and respond to cases of possible or actual misconduct by members or certificants. Any violations should be reported to MSNCB in writing and should include a detailed description of factual allegations supporting the charges, and any relevant supporting documentation. Information submitted during the complaint investigation and any hearing/appeals process is considered confidential. Information gathered as part of these proceedings will become part of MSNCB permanent files and not be returned.

The Ethics Committee is authorized to recommend actions and to carry out the decisions of the board, but not to act on behalf of the board.



Appeals

Policy Category	Ethics, Quality & Accountability
Policy Number	ETH-210
Policy Title	Basis and Process for Appeals Policy

POLICY

MSNCB recognizes the right of individuals to appeal its decisions and actions in certain circumstances. An appeal, for purposes of this policy, is defined as applicable to a problem related to certification or recertification. In all cases, the person filing the appeal is responsible to provide adequate documentation to support the appeal.

All eligible appeals must be filed within thirty (30) days of notification of denial, suspension, or revocation of certification or the right to appeal shall be considered forfeited.

The appeal will be reviewed and decided by a sub-committee of the MSNCB and AMSN Board of Directors who were not involved, have no knowledge of the previous recommended decision by the Ethics Committee, and did not approve the decision for denial, suspension, or revocation as outlined in Policy ETH-211 or Policy CRT-408.

BASIS FOR APPEALS

Appeals may be filed in the following circumstances:

1. **Denial of eligibility for the certification examination.** It is the responsibility of the candidate to provide adequate documentation to support eligibility. Eligibility criteria will not be altered.
2. **Denial of eligibility for recertification by continuing education:**
 - a. Denial of credit for continuing education hours.
 - b. Insufficient hours due to catastrophic natural or personal event(s).
3. **Denial or revocation of certification:** The Ethics Committee shall forward all appeals of revocation and supporting evidence to the Board sub-committee.

INELIGIBLE FOR APPEALS

Appeals may not be filed for the following:

1. Failure to complete the certification examination in the time allotted.
2. The validity of a specific test item.
3. Failure to meet deadline dates (i.e., supporting documentation, audit requests).
4. Subsequent action against the individual's credential due to disciplinary action of the RN license by a licensing authority.
5. Failure to receive recertification notice. It is the responsibility of the certificant to apply for recertification and to notify MSNCB of change of name, address and/or contact information (Policy CRT-602).



Revocation of Certification

Policy Category	Ethics, Quality & Accountability
Policy Number	ETH-211
Policy Title	Revocation of Certification by Ethics Committee Policy

POLICY

MSNCB considers misrepresentation and/or noncompliance with policies about the certification program(s), and/or misuse of the CMSRN® credential serious issues that require investigation and possible disciplinary and/or legal action.

The Ethics Committee will investigate cause(s) of revocation of CMSRN certification that include, but is not limited to:

- Falsification of information on the examination or recertification applications.
- Falsification of any supporting documentation requested by MSNCB.
- Suspected individual pre-knowledge of test content, impersonation, cheating on the CMSRN examination, other evidence of possible examination compromise, or sharing exam knowledge with others.
- Misrepresentation or fraudulent use of the CMSRN credential.
- Violation of MSNCB's Code of Conduct.

If certification is denied, suspended or revoked for any reason, no fee will be refunded.

MSNCB will track all disciplinary actions including status and outcome.



400 Policies: General Administration

Overview and Purpose of Certification

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – General Administration
Policy Number	CRT-401
Policy Title	Overview and Purpose Policy

Certification provides an added credential beyond licensure and demonstrates by examination that the Registered Nurse has acquired a core body of specialized knowledge in Medical-Surgical Nursing. It contributes to consumer protection and confers peer and public recognition to those individuals who prove proficient in their practice.

Certification granted by the MSNCB is pursuant to a voluntary procedure intended solely to test for special knowledge in Medical-Surgical Nursing. The MSNCB does not purport to license, to confer a right or privilege upon, nor otherwise to define the qualifications of any person for nursing practice. The significance of certification in any jurisdiction or institution is the responsibility of the candidate to determine. The candidate should contact the appropriate state board of nursing or institution to determine practice implications.

Purpose of Certification

The purpose of Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification is to promote the highest standards of practice within the specialty, to validate attainment of a common knowledge base required for practice and encourage and promote continuing competence and professional growth.

Conferring of Certification

Certification is awarded to those who have successfully completed the certification or recertification process. The designated credential is Certified Medical-Surgical Registered Nurse (CMSRN®).



Exam Development

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – General Administration
Policy Number	CRT-402
Policy Title	Exam Development Policy

MSNCB participates in and provides oversight for the development and ongoing maintenance of the certification examination(s). MSNCB dedicated staff works in partnership with the test agency(cies) to ensure the exams are developed and maintained in a manner consistent with generally accepted psychometric, education testing practices, and national accreditation standards for certification programs.

Test Development Committee and Subject Matter Experts

The Test Development Committee is responsible for the development of the certification exams. Additional panels of subject matter experts (SMEs) may be appointed to conduct exam development activities as outlined in these policies.

MSNCB or its test agency(cies) will train SMEs to complete the activity to which they are assigned.

Ownership

All work developed by the Test Development Committee or other SMEs is the property of MSNCB.

Job Analysis

Job Analysis Studies will be conducted to identify and validate the knowledge and skills which will be measured by the examination. The results of the Job Analysis will serve as the basis for the examination.

MSNCB has determined that a Job Analysis will be conducted every five (5) years, or more frequently at the board's discretion. This determination is based on the frequency of substantive changes in the field and compliance with standards for professional certification programs.

Exam Specifications

The content for the examination will be determined based on the recommended content outline and content area weights developed following each job analysis. The final content outline and corresponding content weights will be approved by the MSNCB Board of Directors.

Item Writing and Review

Item writing and review activities are typically conducted annually. Item writers and reviewers are required to complete item development training, delivered by the test agency(cies), prior to writing and/or reviewing exam items.

All item development activities will be facilitated and monitored by the test agency(cies).

The development of all items for the exam will be directly linked to the approved content outline.

Once items have been written by trained SMEs, they will be reviewed for accuracy and to avoid bias. Once an item has satisfactorily completed this initial review it will be added to the item bank. Newly written items will be pretested as unscored items before being included as scored (operational) items on a test form.



Item Bank

An item bank will be maintained which includes all items developed for the examination(s). MSNCB's testing agency(cies) will oversee the maintenance and security of the examination item bank.

Data for each item stored in the item bank includes current status (e.g., draft, active, retired), correct answer key, content outline linkage, references, and performance statistics.

Each item in the item bank is reviewed at least every three (3) years for quality control.

Exam Form Assembly and Approval

MSNCB is responsible for exam content and assembly of the exam forms.

New test forms are typically launched on an annual basis. Any test form in use for more than two (2) testing windows will undergo an obsolescence review facilitated by the psychometric consultant with a SME committee to ensure continued item accuracy and relevance. Decisions regarding the number of test forms and the frequency for replacing the exam forms will be made each year by the MSNCB Board in consultation with the psychometric consultant.

Draft examination forms will be assembled by the psychometric consultant to meet the exam specifications and will be reviewed and approved by the Test Development Committee. The draft form(s) will meet the requirements of the test specifications with respect to content and weighting and will be reviewed for bias and sensitivity. Each exam form will include unscored experimental questions.

Establishing the Passing Point

The passing point for the exam will be established using a criterion-reference technique. Qualified and trained SMEs will participate in determining the passing point working with the psychometric consultant.

The process used to determine the passing point will be documented as part of a cut score study report. The final passing point resulting from this process will be approved by the MSNCB Board of Directors. Any modifications to the recommended passing point will be documented in the final passing point study report along with the rationale for those changes.

Specific methodologies for establishing the passing score for exams and ensuring test forms are equivalent will be selected and documented by the psychometric consultant based on compliance with national accreditation standards.

A standard setting study will be conducted following completion of each job analysis study, at a minimum, but can be conducted more frequently to support programmatic requirements. Forms developed between job analysis studies will be equated to the base form.

Exam Analysis / Technical Reporting

Performance statistics will be calculated and retained for each exam item and each exam form. A statistical analysis will be performed by the psychometric consultant following each administration of the exam.



At least annually, a test analysis or technical report will be produced by the psychometric consultant and reviewed by MSNCB to evaluate the reliability and effectiveness of the examination and to determine any areas that must be reviewed or revised.

At a minimum, the technical reports will include a summary of the exam administration, the number of exam takers, the passing point and number of exam items, measures of average performance, measures of performance variability, reliability indices, pass-fail percentages, and recommendations from the psychometric consultant. The psychometric will analyze performance across all exam administration modalities to ensure comparability and identify potential irregularities.

Documentation

All examination development activities (including job analysis, item development, test form assembly, cut score studies, equating, and test/item analysis) will be documented in formal exam development reports by the contracted testing agency(cies).



Exam Administration

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – General Administration
Policy Number	CRT-403
Policy Title	Exam Administration Policy

POLICY

MSNCB exams are administered at secure locations under standardized procedures to ensure fairness to all candidates. MSNCB may delegate administration of the exams to a testing agency(ies) but the Board maintains oversight to ensure policies and procedures are maintained.

The computer-based examination is offered year-round within a designated ninety (90) day window of testing. Computer-based tests are available through the testing agency(ies) or via live, remote proctoring.

Proctor

All MSNCB exams are administered and monitored by a live proctor, whether administered at a test center or via live remote proctoring. All proctors are trained and agree to maintain confidentiality and avoid conflicts of interest.

Testing Irregularities

The proctor will report any irregularities according to the test agency(cies) policies. The test agency(cies) will report irregularities to MSNCB. Irregularities will be reviewed by MSNCB and root cause analysis will be conducted, if deemed necessary.



Non-Discrimination and Test Accommodations

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – General Administration
Policy Number	CRT-404
Policy Title	Non-Discrimination and Special Testing Arrangements Policy

POLICY

MSNCB shall not discriminate against any certification candidate on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, marital status, sexual orientation and gender identity. MSNCB shall not publish materials with discriminatory content, graphics or language that may be offensive to population subgroups.

PROCEDURE

1. MSNCB and its contracted testing agency(ies) will make special testing arrangements to accommodate any candidate with disabilities protected under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 as Amended in 2008, that interfere with test taking.
 - i. Candidates may request special accommodations when completing an exam application. Special accommodation applications are reviewed by certification staff. Staff will request the candidate to complete a Test Accommodation Request Form that includes the contact information and signature of a licensed healthcare professional qualified to diagnose the specific illness or disability and who has completed a professional evaluation of the candidate in the past three years. Additional documentation may be requested by MSNCB after submission of the Test Accommodation Form.
 - ii. Upon approval, MSNCB will authorize the contracted testing agency(ies) to setup the accommodations for the test candidate.
 1. Contracted testing agency(ies) will provide MSNCB their policies and procedures that address accommodation requests. These policies include, but are not limited to, accommodations that do/do not require special scheduling arrangements and accommodations that cannot be delivered by remote proctoring.
2. Every effort will be made to accommodate candidates with disabilities protected under ADA.
3. MSNCB shall review all of its written materials (e.g. brochures, applications, letters) to avoid bias and ensure sensitivity. Photographs or graphics included in brochures will include a diversity of individuals with regard to age, race, and gender.
4. MSNCB's test agency(cies) and the Test Development Committee, including item writers, will follow the established procedures for eliminating bias/sensitive items on the test.



Designation of Certification

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – General Administration
Policy Number	CRT-405
Policy Title	CMSRN Designation of Certification Policy

Certification is awarded to those who successfully complete the requirements for certification and recertification. Certification is valid for five (5) years. The certification start date will be the first of the month in which the individual successfully passed the exam. Use of the following designation for certified individuals may be used in all correspondence or professional relations:

CMSRN® – Certified Medical-Surgical Registered Nurse

The testing agency(ies) will forward a list of candidates passing the examination and a summary report of test scores to MSNCB. MSNCB will send a notification of credential status and a digital badge to passing candidates.



Certification Fees

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – General Administration
Policy Number	CRT-406
Policy Title	Certification/Recertification Fees Policy

POLICY

The Board of Directors will establish fees for all certification activities. There will be separate fees for the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses (AMSN®) members and non-members.

FEE CATEGORIES

1. Certification Fee

The examination fee includes a non-refundable application fee. Membership in AMSN must be current when applying for the exam to be eligible for the reduced membership fee.

2. Re-examination Fee

A candidate who does not pass the examination may submit a new application to take the exam. First time retakes receive a discount if applying within one (1) year after the unsuccessful exam date. This fee includes a non-refundable application fee. Candidates who take an exam through an MSNCB FailSafe™ Certification Program are not eligible for a reduced rate.

A candidate who does not pass the second examination is required to complete a new application and make payment of the full examination fee.

3. MEDSURG-BC Transfer Fee

A candidate who is currently certified as a medical-surgical nurse through American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) may certify through the MEDSURG-BC transfer process.

4. Recertification Fee

To recertify, an applicant will pay a fee to renew by continuing education or pay the examination fee to recertify by examination.

5. Inactive Status Fee

Prior to their expiration date, certificants must submit an application inactive status and pay the application fee. See Policy CRT-606 – Inactive Status.



6. Emeritus Status Fee

Prior to their expiration date, certificants must submit an application for written request to be placed on retired status and pay the application fee. See Policy CRT-605 - Emeritus Status.

7. Extension Fee

Certificants may apply for a one-time only paid extension of their computer-based testing window expiration date for a fee. The candidate must apply within ten (10) days of the exam for the extension. The candidate must test within the second 90-day window or all fees, including the original exam fee, will be forfeited. The Extension Fee is an application fee and is non-refundable.

8. Certification Cancellation Fee

Certification cancellation requests for MSNCB exams must be received no later than six (6) days before the scheduled exam. If the exam is scheduled in the next six days, certificants will be able to request an extension instead. Canceling the exam application will not automatically result in a refund of application fees.

MSNCB understands that emergencies happen. Cancellation requests must be sent by letter, fax, or email. Supporting documentation must be provided. Each request will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If the cancellation is accepted, candidates may be refunded the application payment minus the application fee.

9. Late Application Fee

Recertification applications received less than thirty (30) days from and within one (1) year after the certification expiration date will be charged a late fee.



Notification of Exam Scores

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – General Administration
Policy Number	CRT-407
Policy Title	Notification and Publication of Examination Scores Policy

POLICY

Candidates who take either the computer-based testing (CBT) or live remote proctored (LRP) exam for MSNCB certifications will be notified of their scores immediately after completing the exam.

PROCEDURE

1. The testing agency will forward all examination scores to the candidates as follows:
 - a. A standard score* and sub scores in all major test areas of concentration will be provided for all testing candidates.
2. Stakeholders, such as employers, may verify the certification status of a certificant by requesting the certificant to provide them a link to their authenticated digital badge. Information provided about certificants includes name, credential, candidate I.D. number, credential valid from and valid through date. In the event that the digital badge is not available, the candidate may request that a letter stating their certified status be sent to their employer. This letter is sent by the certification board.

MSNCB will release yearly aggregate statistics for each certification only after the specific certification has reached the minimum amount of certificants to apply for accreditation. These statistics will include the number of exams taken, number of exams passed, the overall pass rate, number of recertifications, and the total certified.



Denial or Suspension of Certification

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – General Administration
Policy Number	CRT-408
Policy Title	Administrative Denial or Suspension of Certification Policy

POLICY

MSNCB considers misrepresentation and/or noncompliance with eligibility criteria and failure to comply with policies about the certification program(s) serious issues that may require disciplinary action.

Any administrative denials or suspensions will follow the timelines as delineated in the appropriate policies (i.e. audit deadline dates; recertification supporting documentation deadline dates).

MSNCB Staff will investigate and may deny or suspend CMSRN® applications or certification without MSNCB board approval for causes including, but not limited to:

- Failure to pay any appropriate and required fees.
- Failure to supply requested material by given deadline dates.
- Failure to respond to or pass an audit.
- Any restrictions, such as revocation, suspension, probation, or other sanctions, of the professional RN license by the nursing license authority that limits the nurse's ability to function and perform those tasks normally associated with the medical-surgical specialty nursing practice.

It is the responsibility of the certificant to notify MSNCB of a change (i.e., probation) in the professional RN license by the nursing authority within thirty (30) days. If the certificant fails to give notification and MSNCB discovers the restriction, MSNCB reserves the right to suspend or revoke the certificant's credential.

If certification is denied or suspended for any reason, no fee will be refunded. Individuals whose certification is suspended are eligible for reinstatement if the cause of the suspension is resolved within the individual's existing certification period.

MSNCB will track all denials and suspensions.



FailSafe Certification Program

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – General Administration
Policy Number	CRT-409
Policy Title	FailSafe Certification Program Policy

POLICY

The FailSafe Certification Program is a facility-based program in which MSNCB contracts with a facility for a one (1) year period. The facility is provided with a unique code to give to eligible RNs employed at the facility, so they may apply for an MSNCB examination without paying upfront fees.



500 Policies: Initial Certification

Eligibility Criteria for Initial Certification

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – Initial Certification
Policy Number	CRT-501
Policy Title	Eligibility Criteria for CMSRN Certification Policy

METHODS OF CERTIFICATION

A. CMSRN Examination

Certified Medical-Surgical Registered Nurse (CMSRN) candidates must meet all eligibility criteria at the time they complete the application, submit all fees, and successfully pass the certification examination. Candidates who sit for the exam will be notified upon passing the exam by the testing agency.

B. MEDSURG-BC Transfer

Certification by MEDSURG-BC Transfer is offered to those registered nurses who are already certified in medical-surgical nursing through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). A MEDSURG-BC Transfer application may be submitted thirty (30) days prior to the current certification expiration date.

POLICY

To become certified as a Certified Medical-Surgical Registered Nurse (CMSRN), candidates must meet all eligibility criteria at the time they complete the application and submit all fees. No person shall be excluded from the opportunity to participate in the MSNCB certification program on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. To be eligible for certification, candidates must meet the following requirements:

For CMSRN Examination

- A. Hold a current, full, and unrestricted license as a registered nurse (RN) in the United States, its territories or Canada

OR

Hold a current, full, and unrestricted license as a first-level nurse in the country in which one's nursing education was completed and meet the eligibility for licensure as a registered nurse (RN) in the United States in accordance with the requirements of the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) or World Education Services (WES).



- B. Have accrued a minimum of 2,000 hours of nursing practice within the past three (3) years of practice in a medical-surgical setting. Practice may include clinical, management, or education.

Any exception to these criteria will be handled on a case-by-case basis according to the Appeals Policy.

For MEDSURG-BC Transfer

- A. Hold a current, full, and unrestricted license as a registered nurse (RN) in the United States, its territories or Canada

OR

Hold a current, full, and unrestricted license as a first-level nurse in the country in which one's nursing education was completed and meet the eligibility for licensure as a registered nurse (RN) in the United States in accordance with the requirements of the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) or World Education Services (WES).

- B. Provide proof of current medical-surgical certification through ANCC.
- C. Have accrued a minimum of 1,000 hours of nursing practice over the last five (5) years in a medical-surgical setting. Practice may include clinical, management, or education.

RN students in a nursing baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degree program can waive the employment eligibility requirement by submitting documentation signed by a school official, verifying full-time status and matriculation. Academic courses must be biopsychosocial content and must be offered by an accredited educational institution.

- D. Have earned ninety (90) approved contact hours over the five (5) year period – sixty-eight (68) or seventy-five percent (75%) of these approved contact hours must be medical-surgical related. The remainder of the contact hours may be professional development or other nursing related subjects. Contact hours may start accruing January 1 of the year of certification.

Education programs must be presented by an individual, state, or national organization accredited as a provider or approver of continuing nursing education. Education programs may be in any format including, but not limited to, courses, workshops, and independent study modules.

Candidates attest to submitting correct information during the application process. Additionally, MSNCB staff will audit 5% of applications for initial certification to verify requirements are met.



International Testing

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – Initial Certification
Policy Number	CRT-502
Policy Title	International Testing Policy

POLICY

The Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board’s (MSNCB’s) mission to validate excellence in medical-surgical nursing is inclusive of all nurses practicing the specialty of medical-surgical nursing. Its certification examinations are developed using evidence-based psychometric and test development principles, including an empirical practice analysis of nurses practicing within the United States (U.S.) health care system and culture. The exams, therefore, are reflective of U.S. practice and culture. Registered nurses (RNs) practicing in other countries who choose to achieve the **Certified Medical-Surgical Registered Nurse (CMSRN®)** certification through MSNCB will be informed of this via the website.

Health care organizations outside of the United States are not eligible for participation in the MSNCB FailSafe™ Certification Program.

PROCEDURE

1. International candidates seeking to take the CMSRN exam will:
 - a. Meet all eligibility requirements for certification prior to application with the following modifications:
 - i. If the candidate is licensed outside the U.S., its territories, or Canada, the RN license must be verified for equivalency by a credentials evaluation organization such as the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) or World Education Services (WES) prior to application.
 - ii. If the candidate was educated outside the U.S., education must be verified for equivalency by a credentials evaluation organization such as CGFNS or WES prior to application.
 - b. Follow all current application procedures.
 - c. Take the same CMSRN exam as RN candidates practicing in the U.S.
 - d. Meet all requirements and follow all current procedures for recertification.
 - e. Be subject to all MSNCB policies including, but not limited to: cheating; denial, suspension, and revocation of certification; and appeals processes.
2. Fees for international candidates will be adjusted to reflect the additional costs of local testing facilities, if applicable. International candidates are eligible for member discounts.



Retaking the Exam

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – Initial Certification
Policy Number	CRT-503
Policy Title	Re-examination Policy

POLICY

The computer-based examination is offered year-round within a designated ninety (90) day window of testing. Computer-based tests are available through the testing agency(ies) or via live, remote proctoring.

Candidates who take an exam through an MSNCB FailSafe™ Certification Program are not eligible for a reduced fee.

PROCEDURE

1. A candidate who does not pass the examination may retake the examination at a one-time reduced fee. The reduced fee is offered to encourage unsuccessful candidates to try again. Candidates are required to test on a different form of the exam.
2. Applications for re-examination must be submitted no later than one (1) year after the initial exam to receive the reduced rate. There will be separate fees for members of AMSN and non-members.
3. A candidate who does not pass the second examination is considered failed. Any repeat examination will require completion of a new application and payment of full examination fee.



Exam Extensions

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – Initial Certification
Policy Number	CRT-504
Policy Title	CMSRN Exam Extensions Policy

POLICY

CMSRN test candidates are allowed ninety (90) days to take the exam from the date they receive their Authorization to Test (ATT). Under certain circumstances, the candidate is allowed to request an exam extension which will grant them a new ninety (90)-day test period in which to schedule and take the CMSRN® exam.

PROCEDURE

1. Test candidates may request an exam extension under the following circumstances:
 - a. The original 90-day test period has expired.
 - b. Candidate scheduled and did not take the exam.
2. The cost of an exam extension is a non-refundable processing fee. The cost of the extension may change without notice. MSNCB may also, at their discretion, provide no-fee extensions.
3. MSNCB will review exam extension requests on a case-by-case basis. Approval of the exam extension is not guaranteed. Candidate is only charged for the extension if the extension is approved.
4. Test candidates must request an extension within ten (10) days of their ATT expiring or missing a scheduled exam. Late requests will be denied, and exam fees will be forfeited. If requested, supporting documentation for the candidate's reason for test period expiration or missing a scheduled exam must be supplied within ten (10) business days.
5. Candidates will be notified by email and phone of approval or denial of an extension.
6. One extension may be granted per exam registration. Test candidate must test within the new ninety (90)-day test period or all fees, including the exam and extension fees, will be forfeited.



600 Policies: Recertification

Eligibility Criteria for Recertification

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – Recertification
Policy Number	CRT-601
Policy Title	Eligibility Criteria for CMSRN Recertification Policy

METHODS OF RECERTIFICATION

A. Retest

Recertification candidates must meet the eligibility criteria and test prior to expiration of the current certification. A test application form, along with the appropriate fee, must be submitted prior to the filing deadline for the test date requested. Processing of applications received after the deadline cannot be guaranteed. Candidates who sit for the exam for recertification will be notified upon passing the exam by the testing agency(cies).

B. Continuing Education

Recertification candidates must meet the eligibility criteria and submit their application prior to expiration of the current certification, or within one (1) year past the expiration date. Recertification applications using this option should be completed online, thirty (30) days prior to the last day of the month in which the certification expires.

Applications for recertification received less than thirty (30) days from and within one (1) year past the expiration date are subject to a late fee. This late fee must be included in the payment. No applications will be accepted after the one (1) year date. There will be no exceptions or extension of this time frame. Contact hours earned and applied after the certification expiration date and before the application received date, may not be used in future recertification applications.

POLICY

To recertify, candidates must meet all eligibility criteria at the time they submit a completed application and submit all fees. No person shall be excluded from the opportunity to participate in the MSNCB certification program on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. To be eligible for recertification, candidates must meet the following requirements:

- A. Hold a current certification in medical surgical nursing through MSNCB or the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).
- B. Hold a current, full, and unrestricted license as a registered nurse (RN) in the United States, its territories or Canada; or, hold a current, full, and unrestricted license as a first-level nurse in the country in which one's nursing education was completed, and meet the eligibility for licensure



as a registered nurse (RN) in the United States in accordance with the requirements of the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) or World Education Service (WES).

- C. Have accrued a minimum of 1,000 hours of nursing practice over the last five (5) years in a medical-surgical setting. Practice may include clinical, management, or education.

RN students in a nursing baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degree program can waive the employment eligibility requirement by submitting documentation signed by a school official, verifying full-time status and matriculation. This documentation must be submitted along with the application for recertification. Academic courses must be biopsychosocial content and must be offered by an accredited educational institution.

- D. Have passed the CMSRN exam.

OR

Have earned ninety (90) approved contact hours over the five (5) year period – sixty-eight (68) or seventy-five percent (75%) of these approved contact hours must be medical-surgical related. The remainder of the contact hours may be professional development or other nursing related subjects. Nursing Continuing Professional Development (NCPD) certificates are only required if the CMSRN's application is randomly selected for audit. Contact hours may start accruing January 1 of the year of certification. If the previous renewal was submitted after the expiration date and contact hours earned after that expiration date were utilized, the contact hours may start accruing after that submission date.

Education programs must be presented by an individual, state, or national organization accredited as a provider or approver of continuing nursing education. Education programs may be in any format including, but not limited to, courses, workshops, and independent study modules. Contact hours earned from January 1 of the year of initial certification through the expiration date are acceptable. For additional renewals, contact hours from the new renewal date through the expiration date are acceptable.



Recertification Procedure

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – Recertification
Policy Number	CRT-602
Policy Title	CMSRN Recertification Procedure Policy

POLICY

Each certification period shall be five (5) years. Expiration of certification shall occur on the last day of the month of the initial certification. Candidates must meet eligibility requirements for recertification and pay all appropriate fees.

Recertification may be attained by:

1. Examination Option: The candidate may test up to one (1) year in advance of the expiration of current certification. All criteria for the certification examination must be met and a test application form and appropriate fees paid thirty (30) days prior to certification expiration date.
2. Continuing Education Option: The candidate may submit the recertification application with the required documentation and the appropriate recertification fees up to one (1) year in advance of the expiration of current certification or until one (1) year after the certification expiration with a late fee.

PROCEDURE

Recertification notices will be sent by email and to all applicants prior to the expiration date. It is the applicant's professional responsibility to maintain their certification by monitoring the dates and submitting their application for recertification in a timely manner. Additionally, it is the certificant's responsibility to notify the MSNCB national office of any changes in their name and/or address, telephone or email contact information.

Examination Option

1. Must meet all the criteria for the exam as stated in Policy CRT-601.
2. Must meet all appropriate deadlines for the requested test format.
3. Must submit an examination application at least thirty (30) days prior to certification expiration date or include the late fee with the application. Applications submitted more than one (1) year after the expiration of certification will not be accepted and there will be no exceptions. Applicants who submitted for recertification after the expiration date may not use the CMSRN credential until notified of renewal.
4. Must follow the same exam administration procedure as was followed for the initial certification exam.



Continuing Education Option

1. Must meet all criteria for recertification as stated in Policy CRT-601.
2. Must submit contact hours earned outside of the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses (AMSUN). Contact hours earned through AMSUN are automatically applied to CMSRN's record.
3. Applications submitted more than one (1) year after the expiration of certification will not be accepted and there will be no exceptions. Applicants who submitted for recertification after the expiration date may not use the CMSRN credential until notified of renewal.
4. Ten percent (10%) of all applications will be audited. Applicants will be notified by email of selection for audit. Applicants will be notified via email if there is an inquiry requesting further documentation.



Accepted Contact Hours

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – Recertification
Policy Number	CRT-603
Policy Title	Accepted Certification Renewal Contact Hours Policy

POLICY

Certification renewal may be attained through the accrual of contact hours (CH) from continuing nursing education (CNE) and other professional activities. A minimum of ninety (90) verified CH are required for recertification by continuing education. Candidates must document CNE contact hours and other professional development activities to MSNCB.

DESIGNATION OF CONTACT HOURS

- **MEDICAL-SURGICAL NURSING CONTACT HOURS:** For the purposes of this policy, medical-surgical nursing contact hours are defined as: Contact hours specific to medical-surgical nursing practice. If the content of the activity is included in the CMSRN® exam blueprint, then the contact hours may be applied to the medical-surgical nursing practice category. A minimum of sixty-eight (68) contact hours of the required ninety (90) hours must apply to this category.
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH RELATED CONTACT HOURS:** For the purposes of this policy, professional development and health related topic contact hours are defined as: Contact hours include the broad area of health care, general nursing, and continuing education activities planned to meet the individual’s potential for professional growth. Examples include nursing informatics, interviewing, and financial management. A maximum of twenty-two (22) contact hours of the required 90 hours may apply to this category.

ACCRUAL OF CONTACT HOURS

Initial Certification

Contact hours earned from January 1 of the first year of initial certification may be submitted for recertification. For example, if the certificant’s initial certification date was 5/1/2018, their accrual period begins 1/1/2018 and ends 4/30/2023.

Subsequent Certifications

For all certification periods after the initial certification period, contact hours accrued within the current certification period may be submitted for recertification. If the certificant in the first example recertified on time, their next accrual period would begin 5/1/2023 and end 4/30/2028.

Grace Period

A grace period is the year following the certification expiration date. For all recertification applications submitted during the individual’s grace period, contact hours accrued during the five (5) years immediately preceding submission of their recertification application may be submitted for



recertification. For the subsequent certification period, the contact hour accrual period would begin the day of submission of their recertification application.

ACCEPTABLE CONTACT HOUR ACTIVITIES

Each category section below includes instructions on how to convert the activity into contact hours and the maximum number of contact hours a certificant may earn for each activity (**Convert**), whether the activity can be designated MedSurg or ProfDev (**Designation**), how to submit the activity to MSNCB (**Submit**).

Category 1: Continuing Education

Continuing education from an accredited provider or approver of Nursing Continuing Professional Development (NCPDs). To be eligible, the continuing education must confer a certificate that includes your name, the date and title of the program, the number of NCPDs awarded, and an accreditation statement. Continuing education with the same course information may only be accepted once per certification period.

- Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) is accepted once per certification period as medical-surgical contact hours.
- Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) is accepted once per certification period as professional development contact hours.
- Basic Life Support (BLS) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) are *not* accepted as contact hours.
- Contact hours earned at an education convention or seminar with multiple sessions may be listed as the total amount for the entire convention or seminar as long as contact hours are either all MedSurg or all ProfDev. MSNCB reserves the right to request additional information on convention or seminar content or objectives.
- Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits are acceptable when the content is applicable to medical-surgical nursing. Course outline and/or objectives must be submitted. One CME equals one contact hour, and you may earn a maximum of forty-five (45) contact hours per recertification period from CME.

Convert: One credit earned from continuing education is equal to one contact hour. You may earn a maximum of ninety (90) contact hours from continuing education.

Designation: MedSurg or ProfDev

Submit: If you complete continuing education in the AMSN Online Library *and complete the associated evaluation*, then your contact hours will automatically transfer to your application within 24 hours of completing the evaluation. Please do not duplicate entries by adding AMSN Online Library continuing education to the application yourself. Any other continuing education must be entered into your application as Self-Reported CNE Activities. We do not require certificates to verify continuing education, but it is advisable to maintain supporting documentation for the entire five-year certification period. If you complete continuing education in the AMSN Online Library *and complete the associated evaluation*, then you do not need to provide any extra documentation for an audit. For any other continuing education, you must submit the certificate that includes your name, the date and title of the program, the number of NCPDs awarded, and an accreditation statement.



Category 2: Preceptorship/Mentorship

Preceptors and mentors must provide clinical supervision to baccalaureate, masters, or doctoral degree students and/or newly hired nurses.

Convert: Six (6) hours of precepting or mentoring is equal to one contact hour. You may earn a maximum of twenty (20) contact hours from continuing education.

Designation: MedSurg

Submit: Documentation must be provided from the school of nursing or by the nurse manager. Please first enter your precepting hours into your application as Self-Reported Non-CNE Activities, and submit the precepting form for your supporting documentation.

Category 3: Academic Courses

A registered nurse enrolled in an accredited baccalaureate, masters, or doctoral degree program may receive contact hours for academic course work related to nursing.

- General education courses may not be used.
- Academic courses should be listed as separate entries in your application. Please do not enter more courses into your application than you are allowed to claim contact hours for.
- You may claim credit for a specific course only once per accrual period, even if you took the course multiple times during the accrual period.

Convert: One academic credit/hour is equal to fifteen (15) contact hours. You may earn a maximum of seventy-five (75) contact hours from academic credits/hours.

Designation: MedSurg or ProfDev

Submit: A copy of your unofficial transcript must be uploaded as supporting documentation.

Category 4: Presentations

The presentation of new content for academic courses or continuing nursing education programs.

- The presentation must award participants with academic credits or contact hours from an accredited or approved provider of continuing nursing education.
- If the presentation is presented more than once, contact hours will only be awarded for one presentation during the accrual period.

Convert: One hour of a presentation is equal to three (3) contact hours. You may earn a maximum of forty-five (45) contact hours from presentations.

Designation: MedSurg or ProfDev

Submit: Presentations must be entered into your application as Self-Reported Non-CNE Activities. You will be asked to submit a copy of the accreditation approval letter for the course presentation.



Category 5: Publications

The format must be a manuscript, research paper, book, or book chapter and must be published by a recognized publisher or professional journal.

Convert: Authors, co-authors, or editors of a book earn twenty-five (25) contact hours per book. Authors or co-authors of a book chapter earn ten (10) contact hours per chapter. Authors or co-authors of a published article earn five (5) contact hours for each article. You may earn a maximum of twenty-five (25) contact hours from publications.

Designation: MedSurg or ProfDev

Submit: Publications must be entered into your application as Self-Reported Non-CNE Activities with the title of publication, name of publication, publisher, date, objectives, bibliography.

Category 6: Conference Poster

The poster must be relevant to nursing practice and presented at a regional or national meeting.

- If the poster is presented more than once, contact hours will only be awarded for one presentation during the accrual period.

Convert: One poster is equal to five (5) contact hours. You may earn a maximum of twenty (20) contact hours from conference posters.

Designation: MedSurg or ProfDev

Submit: Conference poster presentations must be entered into your application as Self-Reported Non-CNE Activities with proof of poster development and presentation must be provided (e.g., meeting syllabus).

Category 7: Multimedia Program

The development of program content and scripts for video, audio, or other electronic media related to nursing practice.

Convert: One hour of a program is equal to five (5) contact hours. You may earn a maximum of twenty (20) contact hours from multimedia programs.

Designation: MedSurg or ProfDev

Submit: Multimedia program development must be entered into your application as Self-Reported Non-CNE Activities with media type, objectives, script or program outline, bibliography.

Category 8: Research/Evidence Based Practice Projects

Research projects that have been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in your facility in which you are clearly identified as one of the primary investigators.



Evidence-based practice projects given exempt status by the IRB or have been implemented in your facility and are reflected in its policies, procedures, or clinical guidelines. You must be clearly identified as one of the primary champions in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the project.

Convert: One research project is equal to thirty (30) contact hours. You may earn a maximum of thirty (30) contact hours from a research project. One evidence-based practice project is equal to fifteen (15) contact hours. You may earn a maximum of fifteen (15) contact hours from an evidence-based practice project.

Designation: MedSurg or ProfDev

Submit: A copy of the research proposal submitted to your facility's IRB or the evidence-based practice project must be uploaded into your application as Self-Reported Non-CNE Activities. If audited, please be prepared to explain your level of involvement in the research project or evidence-based practice project.

Category 9: Board Member or Committee Chair of National Nursing Organization

Board member or committee chair of a national nursing organization. Membership in a national nursing organization is not accepted for contact hours.

Convert: One hour of participation is equal to one contact hour. You may earn a maximum of five (5) contact hours from being a board member or committee chair of a national nursing organization.

Designation: ProfDev

Submit: Board member or committee chair of national nursing organization must be entered into your application as Self-Reported Non-CNE Activities. You will be asked to submit a letter from the association or certification board confirming director status and term dates.

Category 10: MSNCB Test Development and Task Forces

Members of any MSNCB Test Development, Item Writer, or Item Reviewer Committees or MSNCB Task Forces may count their volunteer time as contact hours towards recertification.

Convert: One volunteer weekend session is equal to five (5) contact hours. You may earn a maximum of twenty (20) contact hours from being on an MSNCB Committee or Task Force.

Designation: MedSurg or ProfDev, to be determined by MSNCB

Submit: Contact hours from being on MSNCB Test Development, Item Writer, or Item Reviewer Committees or MSNCB Task Forces will be entered into your application by the Credentialing Team and should not be self-reported.



Category 11: MSNCB Recertification Committee

Members of the MSNCB Recertification Committee may count their volunteer time as contact hours towards recertification.

Convert: One year of volunteering is equal to two (2) contact hours. You may earn a maximum of twenty (20) contact hours from being on the MSNCB Recertification Committee.

Designation: ProfDev

Submit: Contact hours from being on the MSNCB Recertification Committee will be entered into your application by the Credentialing Team and should not be self-reported.

Category 12: AMSN Volunteer Units

Members of certain AMSN Volunteer Units may be eligible to claim contact hours for their active volunteer participation. Paid volunteers are ineligible to receive contact hours.

Convert: Contact hours to be determined at the discretion of the AMSN committee chair and staff liaison. You may earn a maximum of twenty (20) contact hours from being on an AMSN Volunteer Unit.

Designation: MedSurg for the Clinical Practice Committee and the AMSN Legislative Committee; all other AMSN committees are ProfDev

Submit: Contact hours from being on an AMSN Volunteer Unit will be entered into your application by the Credentialing Team and should not be self-reported.



Recertification Audit

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – Recertification
Policy Number	CRT-604
Policy Title	Recertification Audit Policy

POLICY

MSNCB will audit ten percent (10%) of the recertification applications submitted for each certification program. If at any time during the audit process the applicant does not provide the required documentation by deadline date(s), the applicant’s certification will be denied or revoked, and all fees will be forfeited.

PROCEDURE

1. If selected for audit, the applicant’s work history will be verified by their listed supervisor via the contact information provided.
2. Once work history is verified, the application will be assigned to a member of the CMSRN Recertification Committee.
3. Within ten (10) days of assignment, the auditor will review self-reported contact hour entries and supporting documentation.
 - If complete, the application will be approved and the applicant will be notified immediately via email.
 - If incomplete, the applicant will be notified via email to respond to the auditor’s inquiries. Applicant will be given thirty (30) days to respond to the inquiry before their application is denied and all fees forfeited.



Emeritus Status

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – Recertification
Policy Number	CRT-605
Policy Title	Emeritus Status Policy

PURPOSE

The Emeritus designation is intended both to recognize CMSRN® certified nurses' years of service caring for patients and their families, and to acknowledge their dedication to having been certified. Retirement from nursing practice can take place for many reasons including illness or disability, career change or choice. Many nurses would like to stay connected, no matter what path they choose. Emeritus status is a point on a career map that allows nurses to demonstrate their professional value. There is also the potential for continued input and affiliation by these nurses.

POLICY

Current CMSRN® certified nurses who have retired within the five (5) years of their current certification may apply for Emeritus status. To apply, the certified nurse must complete the Emeritus status application. The application for Emeritus status must be submitted before the expiration of the current certification. If approved, Emeritus designation is valid for as long as one remains retired from nursing practice.

The designation as written below may be used on a resume or below the name and credentials on a business card but may NOT be used after a signature or on a name badge.

- Certified medical-surgical nurses who held the CMSRN® certification and subsequently retired may use "CMSRN®-Emeritus" designation.

If an Emeritus Status nurse re-enters the workforce **within three (3) years** from the date of Emeritus status and wishes to reinstate the full CMSRN credential, the nurse may apply for recertification by continuing education, meet all current eligibility criteria, and pay all appropriate fees. Criteria for eligibility must be accrued within the 5 years immediately preceding reactivation. If approved, the new certification period will be effective for five (5) years from time of reactivation.

If the Emeritus Status nurse re-enters the workforce **after three (3) years** from the date of retirement status and wishes to reinstate the full CMSRN credential, the nurse must regain the credential through the initial certification process.



Inactive Status

Policy Category	Certification, Recertification & Testing – Recertification
Policy Number	CRT-606
Policy Title	Inactive Status Policy

PURPOSE

CMSRN® certified nurses with current certifications who are unable to meet the continuing educational requirement, or the practice requirement may apply for Inactive Status. If approved, Inactive Status will be granted for one, three (3) year period only and is a one-time career option.

POLICY

To apply for inactive status, the certified nurse must complete the inactive application and submit a letter of explanation for the request. The application for inactive status must be submitted thirty (30) days before the expiration of the current certification.

If approved, inactive status will be granted for only one, three (3) year period. During this time, the credential cannot be used. Under no circumstance will the inactive period be extended beyond three (3) years.

In order to reactivate certification before or at the end of the three (3) year inactive period, the nurse must apply for recertification by continuing education, meet all current eligibility criteria, and pay all appropriate fees. Criteria for eligibility must be accrued within the appropriate years immediately preceding reactivation. If approved, the new certification period will be effective for five (5) years from time of reactivation.

