



# **National Certified Counselor™ (NCC®) Program Certification Maintenance Policy**

**Aug. 25, 2021**

## A. POLICY INTRODUCTION

The National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. (NBCC) administers a rigorous, examination-based, professional certification program designated as the NBCC National Certified Counselor (NCC) Program. Those individuals who have been granted the NCC credential (certificants) must demonstrate an ongoing professional commitment to the field of counseling by satisfying the continuing certification requirements of this Program.

Effective as of June 16, 2021, this Policy establishes and explains the requirements that must be satisfied in order to maintain certification, including the NBCC certification maintenance standards, guidelines, and procedures (NBCC NCC Certification Maintenance Program). Questions concerning this Policy and the certification maintenance process should be directed to the Director of Certification and Credentialing Services.

## B. POLICY PURPOSES

The NCC Certification Maintenance Program supports the ongoing professional development of NBCC certificants and the validity of NCC certification. Among other purposes, the Certification Maintenance Program is intended to: require the completion of reasonable and appropriate continuing education and professional activities; provide a standardized and objective process for identifying appropriate professional development activities; enhance the ongoing professional development of certificants; and encourage and recognize individualized learning opportunities.

## C. PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT

Consistent with the terms of this Policy, certificants must satisfy the following requirements in order to maintain NCC certification.

1. Continuing Education Requirements. Certificants must complete a minimum of one hundred (100) continuing education (CE) credit hours during each five (5) year certification maintenance cycle. Unless otherwise permitted by this Policy, CE credit hours will be accepted only for participation in qualified activities during the current certification maintenance cycle.
  - a. General Continuing Education Conversion Table. One (1) CE credit hour is earned for each hour (sixty [60] minutes) spent in a structured learning or other approved professional activity relevant to the field of mental health counseling, as defined by this Policy. The following table explains the conversion method for quantifying educational and professional activities as NBCC CE credit hours.
    1. One (1) CE credit hour = 60 minutes/ One quarter (.25) CE credit hour = 15 minutes
    2. One (1) academic semester credit = 15 CE credit hours
    3. One (1) academic quarter credit = 10 CE credit hours
  - b. Certification Maintenance Cycle. Each certificant must satisfy the certification maintenance requirements of this Policy by the end of each five (5) year certification maintenance period

(cycle). Each certification maintenance cycle begins on the date that the certificant was initially certified as an NCC and ends on the date five (5) years thereafter.

2. Code of Ethics Requirement. Certificants must satisfy the requirements of the NBCC Code of Ethics and related NBCC policies and agreements in order to maintain certification status and be eligible for certification maintenance.
3. Annual Certification Maintenance Requirement. As a condition of certification maintenance eligibility, each certificant must submit to NBCC the required, yearly NCC Certification Maintenance Form and all related fees by the annual certification renewal date provided by NBCC. Failure to submit the required Form and fee(s) will result in the suspension of NCC status.

#### **D. QUALIFYING ACTIVITIES/APPROVED METHODS FOR EARNING CE CREDITS**

Unless otherwise permitted by this Policy, in order to be accepted and approved by the NBCC Certification Program, all certification maintenance activities must be directly related to the following approved continuing education topic areas.

- Counseling Theory/Practice and the Helping Relationship
- Human Growth and Development Theories in Counseling
- Social and Cultural Foundations in Counseling
- Helping Relationships in Counseling
- Group Counseling Theories and Processes
- Career Counseling and Lifestyle Development
- Assessment in Counseling
- Research and Program Evaluation
- Counselor Professional Identity and Practice Issues

Certificants are strongly encouraged to record each qualified CE credit activity by completing an NBCC Continuing Education Credit Verification Form, published on the website at: <https://www.nbcc.org/Assets/ServiceCenter/CE-Credit-Verification.pdf>. Each such completed Verification Form should be added to the certificant's account through the NBCC ProCounselor website, published at: <https://onlineservices.nbcc.org/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?WebCode=LoginRequired&expires=yes&Site=NBCC>.

1. College and University Courses. No CE credit hour limit for each certification maintenance cycle. NBCC CE credits may be earned for qualified academic coursework successfully completed through an accredited university or college graduate program during a certification maintenance cycle. Qualified CE credit hours will only be credited for the portion(s) of such academic coursework directly related to approved continuing education topics. Credit hours and CE credits are calculated based on the percentage of the graduate course content (curriculum) directly related to the approved topic(s), as determined by NBCC. CE credits will be awarded only for qualified courses completed by the certificant and where the certificant receives a passing grade.

Documentation Required: For a period of at least five (5) years following the end of the relevant certification maintenance cycle, certificants must maintain the following information and

materials related to each CE credit college or university graduate course: course transcript issued by the educational institution; grade report or verification form issued by the educational institution, which indicates a passing grade in the course; and a course description or syllabus.

2. Seminars, Workshops, and Conferences. No CE credit hour limit for each certification maintenance cycle. NBCC CE credit hours may be earned for attending seminars, workshops, conferences, and other educational programs (educational programs) offered by organizations approved by NBCC and other educational program providers, consistent with the terms of this Policy. Qualified CE credit hours will only be credited for the portion(s) of such educational programs directly related to an approved continuing education topic. Credit hours and CE credits are calculated based on the percentage of the program content directly related to the approved topic(s), as determined by NBCC.
- a. NBCC Approved Provider Programs and Other Approved Programs. NBCC CE credit hours may be earned for attending educational programs approved by NBCC, or programs offered by educational organizations approved by NBCC and designated as NBCC Approved Continuing Education Providers (NBCC Approved Providers). NBCC Approved Providers adhere to course content and quality standards established by NBCC and are authorized to issue CE credit certificates to attendees. NBCC Approved Providers are identified by the NBCC Approved Provider logo/trademark, and programs qualified for CE credit are identified by the NBCC Approved Provider. A searchable database of NBCC Approved Providers and the programs they offer is published on the NBCC website at: <https://www.nbcc.org/search/acepdirectory>. In addition, single programs approved by NBCC are identified both by the program provider and in a calendar of training events and courses published on the NBCC website at: [https://www.nbcc.org/Assets/CEProvider/Calendar Of Events.pdf](https://www.nbcc.org/Assets/CEProvider/Calendar%20Of%20Events.pdf).

Documentation Required: For a period of at least five (5) years following the end of the relevant certification maintenance cycle, certificants must maintain the following information and materials related to each CE credit educational program: a certificate or letter issued by the NBCC Approved Provider or other program provider verifying attendance during the program; and a description of the program content issued by the provider.

- b. Other Provider Programs. NBCC CE credit hours may be earned for attending qualified educational programs offered by providers not approved by NBCC. Programs offered by organizations not approved by NBCC may be subject to review before related CE credit is approved.

Documentation Required: For a period of at least five (5) years following the end of the relevant certification maintenance cycle, certificants must maintain the following information and materials related to each CE credit education program not approved by NBCC: a certificate or letter issued by the program provider certifying attendance during the program; the program materials published by the provider that explain in detail the topics and content of the program; and the qualifications of the program presenter(s).

3. Publication Authorship and Original Program Presentation Activities. Limit of twenty (20) CE credit hours (maximum) for each certification maintenance cycle.

- a. Publication Authorship. NBCC CE credit hours may be earned for authoring certain original publications directly related to an approved continuing education topic(s). Publication authorship activities are limited to: articles published in refereed and non-refereed professional journals; a chapter in an edited book; or a published book. Credit may be approved for actual publication preparation time only.

Documentation Required: For a period of at least five (5) years following the end of the relevant certification maintenance cycle, certificants must maintain the following information and materials related to each CE credit publication authorship activity: a complete copy of each publication (article, book chapter, or book); and an accurate personal record of actual publication preparation time.

- b. Presentation Activities. NBCC CE credit hours may be earned for acting as a speaker or presenter during an original educational program directly related to an approved continuing education topic. CE credit may be granted for actual presentation and preparation time only.

Documentation Required: For a period of at least five (5) years following the end of the relevant certification maintenance cycle, certificants must maintain the following information and materials related to each CE credit program presentation: a print or electronic copy of the complete presentation materials; a document from the organizational sponsor verifying the program presentation activity and explaining the date, time, and content of the presentation; if available, a summary of the program evaluations from the event; and an accurate personal record of actual presentation preparation time.

4. Doctoral Dissertation. Limit of forty-five (45) CE credit hours (maximum) for each certification maintenance cycle. NBCC CE credit hours may be earned for academic work completed towards a doctoral degree from a regionally accredited college or university graduate counseling program. Creditworthy dissertation work is limited to the completion of doctoral program research activities for which credit has been issued/granted by the college/university counseling program.

Documentation Required: For a period of at least five (5) years following the end of the relevant certification maintenance cycle, certificants must maintain the following information and materials related to CE credit doctoral dissertation work: a transcript, grade report, or other document issued by, and identifying, the relevant college/university verifying the dissertation work completed, the credits granted for such work, the date(s) that the work was completed, and the title of the dissertation.

5. Supervision/Consultation Activities. Limit of twenty-five (25) CE credit hours (maximum) for each certification maintenance cycle. NBCC CE credit hours may be granted for regular, formal supervision or consultation related to clinical counseling services. CE credit is not available or granted for supervision services that the certificant provides to another professional counselor or other mental health professional.

Documentation Required: For a period of at least five (5) years following the end of the relevant certification maintenance cycle, certificants must maintain the following information and materials related to each CE credit supervised counseling services activity: a record/document identifying the supervising professional counselor, their professional qualifications/credentials, and their contact information; and a record/ document issued and signed by the supervisor identifying the start and end dates of the supervision.

6. Professional Leadership Activities. Limit of twenty (20) CE credit hours (maximum) for each certification maintenance cycle. NBCC CE credit hours may be earned for service in certain organizational volunteer leadership positions or leadership activities in the mental health counseling profession. Leadership activities are limited to active volunteer service to professional counseling organizations, associations, or committees. CE credit may be granted for actual service or participation time only.

Documentation Required: For a period of at least five (5) years following the end of the relevant certification maintenance cycle, certificants must maintain the following information and materials related to each CE credit professional organization leadership activity: records identifying the name and location of the relevant professional organization; the leadership position held or leadership activities completed; the manner in which the service or activity was related to the mental health field; the start and end dates of the period in which the service or activity occurred; a personal record of actual service or activity participation time; and a record or other document issued by the professional organization confirming the leadership services or activities provided, including the dates and type(s) of service or activity, signed by an appropriate organizational representative with knowledge of the service or activity.

7. Volunteer/Community Service Counseling Activities. Limit of ten (10) CE credit hours (maximum) for each credential maintenance cycle. NBCC CE credit hours may be earned for providing volunteer (uncompensated) mental health counseling or related services to client individuals or organizations as a community service. Creditworthy community service activities are limited to the provision of volunteer professional services to persons or groups with whom the certificant has no paid contractual, employment, or client relationship. Qualified community service examples include: the provision of volunteer mental health–related services to a community or charitable group. CE credit may be granted for actual service time only.

Documentation Required: For a period of at least five (5) years following the end of the relevant certification maintenance cycle, certificants must maintain the following information and materials related to each CE credit volunteer community service activity: a document issued by the organization, signed by an appropriate organizational representative with knowledge of the service, describing the volunteer services provided, including the dates and type(s) of service(s) work; and an accurate personal record of the actual volunteer service time.

## **E. GENERAL CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Certification Maintenance Activity Reporting Requirement. In order to qualify for certification maintenance, certificants must record at least one hundred (100) CE credit hours and credits



during the prior certification maintenance cycle. CE credit will be granted for a qualifying activity on a one-time only basis.

2. NBCC Review of CE Credit Reporting. All CE credit hours are subject to review and verification by NBCC, by audit or otherwise. NBCC reserves the exclusive authority to determine if: a reported CE credit activity qualifies for CE credit; and a reported CE credit activity qualifies for the number of CE credit hours identified by the certificant. At its sole discretion, NBCC may require that the certificant provide complete and accurate information and/or materials related to a CE credit review or audit, which the certificant must submit in a timely manner. NBCC may grant, deny, or modify the CE credits for any reported activity, consistent with this Policy and related NBCC instructions.
3. Personal Certification Maintenance Record Requirements. In order to receive CE credit for qualifying activities, certificants must collect and maintain all CE credit information and materials identified by this Policy, or as instructed by NBCC, during each certification maintenance cycle. Such information and materials must be stored in a safe and secure manner and made available to NBCC when required. All certification maintenance CE credit records must be maintained for a period of five (5) years following the end of the relevant certification maintenance cycle. Certificants are strongly encouraged to record each qualified, CE credit activity by completing an NBCC Continuing Education Verification Form, published on the website at: <https://www.nbcc.org/Assets/ServiceCenter/CE-Credit-Verification.pdf>. Each such completed Verification Form should be added to the certificant's account through the NBCC ProCounselor website, published at: <https://onlineservices.nbcc.org/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?WebCode=LoginRequired&expires=yes&Site=NBCC>.
4. Certification Maintenance Application Requirement. In order to maintain active NBCC certification, certificants must submit a completed Certification Maintenance Application to NBCC within thirty (30) days of the end of each certification maintenance cycle. A Certification Maintenance Application will be sent to each certificant during the sixty (60) days preceding the end of the certification maintenance cycle. By or before the submission deadline, each certificant must submit a completed Certification Maintenance Application to NBCC along with all required fees and all required information demonstrating that the certificant has satisfied the CE credit requirements of this Policy.
5. Issuance of Certification Maintenance/Certification Certificates. Following the receipt of a complete Certification Maintenance Application and payment of the required fee(s), NBCC will issue a new, current NCC Certification Certificate to the certificant, identifying the effective period of the certification. Certificates will be provided in electronic format without additional cost, or in print format for an additional printing and mailing fee.
6. Annual Maintenance Fee. Certificants will be assessed and required to timely pay an annual certification maintenance fee related to the recording, reviewing, tracking, maintaining, and reporting of CE credit hours. A certification maintenance fee invoice will be emailed to each certificant annually. The annual maintenance fee must be paid in order to maintain active certification status. Such maintenance fee will be determined by NBCC and is subject to change.

7. Transfer of Excess CE Credit Hours. Qualified CE credit hours completed by the certificant during a certification maintenance cycle in excess of the one hundred (100) credit hour requirement may be applied to the next certification maintenance cycle up to a maximum of twenty (20) CE credit hours. Certificants must maintain all required information and materials related to such CE credit activities, consistent with the terms of this Policy.

## F. MANDATORY CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE AUDITS

NBCC will regularly conduct random audits of certificant Certification Maintenance Applications and CE credit activities in order to verify compliance with the Policy requirements. Such audits generally will be conducted on a monthly basis or as otherwise determined by NBCC, and certificants selected for audit will be notified by NBCC. Certificants selected for audit must comply with all audit requirements and must submit copies of the required information and materials supporting each CE credit activity for the current or most recent certification maintenance cycle. Such documentation must be submitted to NBCC and returned by or before the identified deadline. Failure to satisfy audit requirements will result in suspension or revocation of certification, consistent with the terms of this Policy.

## G. FAILURE TO SATISFY CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

The certification status of certificants who fail to satisfy the requirements of the Policy and/or related NBCC instructions initially will be suspended, and the certificant will be placed on inactive status. Such certificants will receive notice of the certification suspension, and the following terms will apply, unless otherwise provided by this Policy.

1. Certification Suspension. Regardless of a certification suspension, the certificant's certification maintenance cycle dates will not change, and the certificant must satisfy all relevant requirements during the certification maintenance cycle, including annual maintenance requirements. Upon satisfactory completion of all relevant certification maintenance requirements, the certificant will be returned to active certification status.
2. Certification Revocation. Failure to satisfy all relevant requirements of this Policy during a suspension period, or otherwise within a one (1) year period after the conclusion of a certification maintenance cycle, will result in revocation and termination of certification. Unless otherwise determined by NBCC, a revoked or terminated certificant is not eligible for reinstatement. Revoked or terminated former certificants must reapply for certification and must satisfy all requirements of the initial certification process.
3. Prohibited Use of Credential. An inactive, suspended, or revoked certificant may not represent themselves as an active certificant or as certified by NBCC, or otherwise reference NBCC certification. A suspended or revoked certificant may not use the NCC credential or certification mark until such time as they receive notice from NBCC that active certification status has been reinstated, consistent with the terms of this Policy.