

# AMERICAN BOARD OF MEDICAL SPECIALTIES

## STANDARDS FOR CONTINUING CERTIFICATION

*Draft for Stakeholder Comment*

***-Introduction-***



American Board  
of Medical Specialties

*Higher standards. Better care.®*

# 41           **STANDARDS FOR CONTINUING CERTIFICATION**

## 42   **INTRODUCTION**

43   The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) and its Member Boards have a unique role  
44   in professional self-regulation. ABMS serves the public and the medical profession by improving  
45   the quality of health care through setting professional standards for lifelong certification in  
46   partnership with Member Boards. ABMS assists Member Boards in their development and use  
47   of assessment and professional standards for the certification of physicians and medical  
48   specialists in the United States. Member Board certification programs serve the patients,  
49   families, and communities of the U.S. by providing individual physicians and medical specialists  
50   (diplomates) with specialty-specific credentials on which the public and those acting on its  
51   behalf can rely.

52  
53   ABMS board certification is a program of rigorous, continuing professional assessment and  
54   development. It begins with initial certification and is sustained through continuing certification,  
55   which is an ongoing program that exemplifies a lifelong dedication to professional growth,  
56   excellence, and a commitment to the ABMS/Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical  
57   Education (ACGME) Core Competencies.

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59   These new “Standards for Continuing Certification” (Standards) promote the design of  
60   integrated, specialty-specific programs by Member Boards that support diplomates’ continuing  
61   professional development and maintain the social contract between the public and the  
62   profession to improve the quality and safety of health care. Taken together, the Standards  
63   provide a comprehensive framework for Member Boards to design certification programs that  
64   meaningfully engage diplomates in activities relevant to their practice.

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66   Programs for continuing certification should emphasize integration, both in the design of a  
67   seamless program as well as with the community they serve. The elements of a continuing  
68   certification program should complement one another; for example, meaningful assessment  
69   drives learning and improvement. To integrate with the community they serve, Member Boards  
70   should work collaboratively with key stakeholders to ensure high-priority population and public  
71   health needs and advances in the specialties are addressed within their continuing certification  
72   programs. Lastly, ABMS Member Boards should strive to develop programs that integrate  
73   seamlessly into a diplomate’s practice of medicine.

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75   Member Boards’ certification programs should ensure that diplomates are in good professional  
76   standing, are keeping up to date with advances in medical knowledge, and are working to  
77   improve themselves, their colleagues, and the systems in which they work.

78  
79   Professionalism is central to self-regulation of the profession, making it of paramount  
80   importance to board certification. To honor medicine’s social contract and uphold the public’s  
81   trust, individual diplomates are expected to affirm, reaffirm, and demonstrate their dedication  
82   to principles of professionalism through their interactions with patients, families, and other

83 health professionals. This entails a personal commitment to the welfare of patients and  
84 collective efforts to improve the health care system for the benefit of society. Professionalism  
85 should be a core element in the design and implementation of each Member Board’s continuing  
86 certification program, thus communicating its centrality and cultivating professional behavior in  
87 all diplomates.  
88

89 See [Appendices](#) for information about the Continuing Board Certification: Vision for the Future  
90 Commission (Vision Commission) recommendations that informed the development of these  
91 Standards, a glossary, implementation and evolution of the ABMS Standards for Continuing  
92 Certification, and more.

DRAFT

## 93 ORGANIZATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

94 The Standards document has been organized into the following groupings: General Standards,  
95 Professional Standing, Lifelong Learning, and Improvement in Health and Health Care. The new  
96 Standards represent an evolution of previous continuing certification standards but retain the  
97 central elements of assessment, learning, and engagement in improvement activities.

98  
99 These Standards are expectations for the design of Member Board continuing certification  
100 programs. Each Member Board must meet each requirement in a manner consistent with the  
101 spirit of the Standards and in a fashion consistent with its specialty. Each Standard has an  
102 associated commentary. Commentaries do not specify additional requirements, but they  
103 provide rationales and context, address important considerations, and offer guidance to the  
104 community's expectations. The commentaries, which reflect the Vision Commission  
105 recommendations (see [Appendix II](#)) to increase cross-board consistency, clarify when  
106 consistency is important and when a specialty-specific variation is justified.

107  
108 The Standards provide a comprehensive framework for Member Boards to design certification  
109 programs that prepare diplomates with the knowledge and resources to provide excellent  
110 patient care. Taken together, this portfolio of performance and participation standards provides  
111 a basis for determining that diplomates continue to meet the standards for knowledge, clinical  
112 skills, and professionalism signified by board certification by an ABMS Member Board.

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