



Certification Handbook

For Certificants and Candidates

Presented by:





Certification Handbook

All information is subject to change without notice, including test content, fees, and policies. Last updated: 10-23-2023.

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BEFORE YOU START

About this Handbook

The CMSRN Certification Handbook provides essential information about certification and recertification of the Certified Medical-Surgical Registered Nurse (CMSRN) credential from the Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board (MSNCB).

We know, there's a lot to get familiar with! We encourage you, the candidate or CMSRN certificant, to read through each section carefully. You are responsible for following all policies and procedures in this handbook. Failure to follow all policies and procedures may result in denial, suspension, or revocation of certification and the forfeiture of your exam or recertification application fees.

MSNCB Policies

Please see CMSRN Certification Policies for a list of policies from MSNCB that are relevant to candidates and CMSRN certificants. Policies covered pertain to ethics, general administration, initial certification, and recertification. These policies are not directly referenced in this handbook, but they were used in the creation of this handbook.

Non-Discrimination Statement

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.

Contact Us

We've tried to answer every (yes, every!) question you may have about earning, using, and keeping the CMSRN. If there's anything you still have questions about, please contact our Customer Service and Credentialing Teams. We typically respond Monday thru Friday, 8:30am – 5pm Central Time.

Visit our website at amsn.org/certification.

Email us at msncb@msncb.org or call us at 866-877-2676.



Medical-surgical nursing is a specialty with a distinct body of knowledge, skills, and abilities that are validated by the Certified Medical-Surgical Registered Nurse (CMSRN) certification from the Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board (MSNCB). Certification is awarded to registered nurses who meet the eligibility criteria and pass the certification exam. CMSRN certification is valid for five years.

Earn it.

- 🔗 Meet eligibility criteria
- 🔗 Submit exam application
- 🔗 Pass the exam
- 🔗 Get certified!



Use it.

- 🔗 Validate your expertise
- 🔗 Climb the clinical ladder
- 🔗 Continue learning
- 🔗 Volunteer with MSNCB



Keep it.

- 🔗 Meet eligibility criteria
- 🔗 Earn contact hours
- 🔗 Submit application
- 🔗 Get recertified!





The [Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board \(MSNCB\)](#) was created in 2002 by members of the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses (AMSN) who identified the need for a certification for medical-surgical nurses. The first Certified Medical-Surgical Registered Nurse (CMSRN) exam was administered in 2003, and 702 medical-surgical nurses earned the credential. Twenty years later, there are over 40,000 CMSRNs.

Our Mission

To validate excellence in medical-surgical nursing.

Our Vision

The CMSRN certification is universally valued as essential to positive patient outcomes.

Our Core Beliefs

Medical-surgical nursing is a specialty with a distinct body of evidence-based knowledge.

Certified RNs positively impact patient outcomes and apply evidence-based practice and research.

Obtaining certification empowers RNs to develop and use their leadership talents.

As an organization, we should continually strive for relevance, accessibility, fairness, and innovation.

Every applicant should have a positive experience with MSNCB, feeling understood, respected, supported, and encouraged.

Board of Directors

The MSNCB Board of Directors (BOD) is the decision-making authority for MSNCB. The BOD manages the business and affairs of MSNCB. They determine policy, manage financials, and define strategic direction. Operationally, the BOD develops, executes, and oversees organizational goals. All directors understand, uphold, and support the mission, vision, values, bylaws, and policies of MSNCB.

[Meet the MSNCB Board of Directors.](#)

Credentialing Team

The MSNCB Credentialing Team carries out the strategic plan for MSNCB. The Executive Director and the Director of Certification Services oversee the long-term plans for MSNCB, and the Certification Coordinator and Associates oversee the day-to-day operations.





The [Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses \(AMSUN\)](#), founded in 1991, provides learning opportunities and community to its members. Members receive discounts on professional development, are eligible for grants and awards, and receive free continuing education. Membership in AMSUN is **not** required to earn the CMSRN.

Join AMSUN!

Professional Development

- ⌘ The [CMSRN Certification Review Course](#) is a thorough review of the most common diseases, symptoms, and issues seen in patients by medical-surgical nurses.
 - [eLearning CRC for Individuals](#). Members receive a \$50 discount.
 - [Live or Virtual CRC for Facilities](#), contact crc@amsn.org.
- ⌘ The [Elevate Series](#) helps you build actionable skills that can be immediately implemented and leveraged to better serve organizations and patients. There are three courses available.
 - [Behavioral Health Program Certificate](#). Members receive a \$100 discount.
 - [Clinical Leadership Development Program](#). Members receive a \$200 discount.
 - [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the Health Care Workforce](#). Members get their first module free.

Grants, Awards, and Scholarships

AMSUN provides [Grants & Scholarships](#) and [Awards](#) to its members. Here are a few examples:

- ⌘ [CMSRN Certification and Recertification Grants](#) cover the cost of the exam or recertification.
- ⌘ [Annual Convention Grant](#) provides funding to attend the AMSUN Annual Convention.
- ⌘ The [PRISM Awards](#) recognizes the exemplary practice of a medical-surgical nursing unit.
- ⌘ [Nursing Research Grant](#) provides funds for research relevant to medical-surgical nurses.

AMSUN Library

AMSUN Members have **free** access to the following content on the [AMSUN Library](#):

- ⌘ [Monthly Nursing Continuing Professional Development \(NCPD\)](#)
- ⌘ [MedSurg Nursing Journal](#)
- ⌘ [MedSurg Matters! Newsletter](#)

Chapters

Connect locally with other medical-surgical nurses by joining or starting an [AMSUN Chapter](#).

Committees and Volunteer Units

Look for an email with a Call for Volunteers to fill open positions in [MSNCB Volunteer Groups](#).





WHY GET CERTIFIED?

Certification could be the missing piece in your career! Find out what certification is, why you should pursue certification, and why you should earn the CMSRN.



Validate Your Expertise

Certification is the process by which an entity grants formal recognition to individuals that meet predetermined, standardized criteria. The certification process involves determination of eligibility, an assessment of demonstration of competence (a.k.a., passing the certification exam), and requirements for regular recertification ([Institute for Credentialing Excellence](#)).

Certification is valuable

Certification communicates to peers, employers, and patients that you are a competent and qualified medical-surgical nurse. You gain the satisfaction of demonstrating your professional competence, the recognition of your peers, and greater confidence in your own abilities.

Certification also offers a way to differentiate yourself in a professional capacity. It can offer advantages in the marketplace, such as better compensation and career longevity. Many employers also seek certified nurses for their workforce because they are essential to achieving and maintaining American Nursing Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet® Recognition.

Certification is good for you

- ⌘ Demonstrate commitment, confidence, and credibility
- ⌘ Validate your expert, specialized knowledge
- ⌘ Maintain an innovative edge in your career
- ⌘ Gain confidence and satisfaction in your professional life
- ⌘ Increase your earning power
- ⌘ Earn respect from patients, colleagues, and employers

Certification is good for your employer

- ⌘ Improved patient care and safety
- ⌘ Attract more qualified nurses
- ⌘ Enjoy higher nurse retention rate





CMSRN Recognition

CMSRN certification validates the professional achievements of the registered nurse who has met identified standards of practice and provides care for medical-surgical patients. A registered nurse who meets the performance level required for competent practice in medical-surgical nursing will receive an acknowledgement of their professional achievements by earning the CMSRN certification.

CMSRN is accredited by ABSNC

The CMSRN exam program has achieved the gold stamp of approval. After meeting rigorous standards, the CMSRN exam was granted accreditation by the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC).



Accreditation demonstrates that the CMSRN credential is based on a valid and reliable testing process. The CMSRN exam received its initial accreditation from ABSNC in January 2009 and has maintained accreditation to date.

The ABSNC promotes the highest quality of specialty nursing practice through the establishment of standards of professional specialty nursing certification. ABSNC accreditation is valid for 5 years.

For more information about ABSNC accreditation, visit absnc.org.

CMSRN is accepted for Magnet Recognition Program®

The [Magnet Recognition Program®](#) from the American Nurses' Credentialing Center (ANCC) is recognized worldwide as a program that healthcare organizations join to promote nursing excellence. The CMSRN is a certification that Magnet-recognized and Magnet-applicant organizations may report in the Demographic Data Collection Tool® (DDCT) to become or stay a Magnet® organization.

View the CMSRN on the list of [accepted professional board certifications in the DDCT](#).

CMSRN is endorsed by AMSN

The Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses (AMSN) is the only national professional nursing specialty organization dedicated to the practice of medical-surgical nursing. The CMSRN is the only medical-surgical certification endorsed by AMSN.

Compare CMSRN to the MEDSURG-BC

The other medical-surgical nursing certification is the MEDSURG-BC from ANCC. See [Appendix G](#) for a comparison of the CMSRN and the MEDSURG-BC, so you can make an informed choice on which certification is right for you.





CMSRN EXAM

Congratulations on beginning your certification journey! The cycle starts here, with the certification exam. In this section, you'll learn about eligibility requirements and test development, how to apply, schedule, and sit for the exam, and where to find study materials.



Eligibility Requirements

We have three main eligibility requirements to apply for the CMSRN. You must meet eligibility requirements at the time you apply for the exam and for the full ninety (90)-day test period.

Three requirements to be eligible for the CMSRN

1. **License.** You must hold an unencumbered and current license as a Registered Nurse (RN) in the United States, its territories, or Canada.
 - International nurses can also apply, see [International Testing](#).
2. **Years of practice.** You must have practiced two (2) full years in a medical-surgical setting with your RN license.
3. **Hours of practice.** You must have worked 2,000 practice hours within the past three (3) years in a medical-surgical setting. Practice may be as a clinical nurse, as a manager, or as an educator.

Med-surg nursing happens everywhere

Don't know if you work in a medical-surgical setting? Review the Domains of Medical-Surgical Nursing Practice in [Appendix A](#). The Domains are based on a practice analysis of medical-surgical nursing. If your nursing practice encompasses most of these activities, then you do meet this eligibility requirement.

Still not sure if your practice experience is in a medical-surgical setting? Medical-surgical nursing is defined as the following by MSNCB and AMSN:

Medical-surgical nursing is the single largest nursing specialty in the United States and beyond. Medical-surgical nurses provide care to adults with a variety of medical issues or who are preparing for/recovering from surgery. They have a broad knowledge base and are experts in their practice. Medical-surgical nurses have advanced organizational, prioritization, assessment and communication skills and are leaders in coordinating care among the interprofessional health care team.

Medical-surgical nursing is practiced in several settings across the health care industry, including hospitals, outpatient settings, in homes, via telemedicine and other non-traditional settings. The specialty of medical-surgical nursing happens in almost every care environment because medical-surgical nursing is what you practice, not where.

Settings that are **not** medical-surgical settings include but are not limited to:

- ⌘ Pediatrics



-  Psychiatry
-  Obstetrics and gynecology
-  Operating room
-  Emergency room



International Testing

The CMSRN is available to first-level nurses practicing outside of the United States as well. Our certificants come from over 13 countries around the world, and we would love to have you as part of our med-surg nursing community.

IMPORTANT: The CMSRN certification exam is based on practice in the medical-surgical nursing specialty in the United States. As such, the CMSRN exam is reflective of U.S. practice, regulations, and culture.

International applicants are outside the US and Canada

“International” refers to any location outside the United States, its territories, or Canada. Applicants who have international nursing experience or education **and** are currently practicing internationally **and** do not hold a U.S. RN license must meet international testing eligibility requirements.

International applicants must be verified for equivalency

1. **License.** You must hold a current, full, and unrestricted nursing license,
 - a. Nursing license held and/or nursing education completed internationally 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 submitting a CMSRN exam application. MSNCB reserves the right to request additional documentation following an agency’s evaluation.
2. **Years of practice.** You must have practiced two (2) calendar years as a first-level nurse in a medical-surgical setting,
3. **Hours of practice.** You must have worked 2,000 hours of practice within the past three (3) years in a medical surgical setting. Practice may be as a clinical nurse, as a manager, or as an educator.

If you can only meet the two-year requirement by combining international practice with a U.S. RN license held for less than two years, then you must also provide the CGFNS or WES to verify the equivalency of your international education and nursing license.

Locations for international testing

International testing is offered as computer-based testing and the exam is delivered by Prometric. Not all countries have a Prometric testing center, but you can take a remote proctored exam from any location. See Prometric policies under [Testing Policies and Procedures](#).





About the Exam

The CMSRN certification exam requires:

- ⌘ Thorough understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for competent clinical practice in medical-surgical nursing. The CMSRN exam is based on what a registered nurse (RN) with two (2) years and 2,000 hours of practice in a medical-surgical setting is expected to know.
- ⌘ Understanding the test format and all policies and procedures. You will want to be familiar with the format of multiple-choice questions and how to read case studies. You will be expected to follow all exam policies and procedures laid out in this handbook and by the test administrator.

2023 CMSRN Exam Blueprint

The following Domains of Nursing Practice comprise the subject areas on the CMSRN exam as of May 15, 2023. For a complete list of activities associated with each Domain, please see [Appendix A](#).

DOMAINS OF MEDSURG NURSING PRACTICE

1. Patient/Care Management
2. Holistic Patient Care
3. Elements of Interprofessional Care
4. Professional Concepts
5. Nursing Teamwork and Collaboration

150 questions on the exam

The CMSRN exam has 150 multiple choice questions. 125 of the questions are scored, and 25 questions are unscored to gather statistical data on item performance for future test forms.

Three hours to complete the exam

- ⌘ You have three (3) hours to complete the exam. We recommend you arrive at the testing center or launch the remote-proctored exam application thirty (30) minutes before the start of your exam.
- ⌘ There is a 10-minute tutorial at the beginning of the exam that will walk you through how to use the exam application. These 10 minutes are not included in the 3-hour exam time.
- ⌘ At the end of the exam is an optional 5-minute exit survey.



Passing standard score of 95

A **standard score of 95**, equal to approximately 71% correct, is required to pass the CMSRN exam. Your raw score is the number of questions you answered correctly out of the 125 scored questions. Your raw score is converted to a standard score to allow for comparison across different exam versions.

Passing score determined by psychometricians and subject matter experts

The passing score for the certification exam is determined by a modified Angoff procedure. The modified Angoff procedure is performed by the Test Development Committee in collaboration with psychometric consultants from our test administrator using a criterion-referenced methodology. The criterion is what a minimally competent nurse needs to know.

Get exam results immediately

You will find out if you passed or failed the exam immediately after completing the exam. The test administrator will send you a Score Report within 24 hours of completing the exam. We will receive your exam score within five (5) days.

Exam developed with Prometric

MSNCB collaborates with our test development partner, Prometric, to develop the CMSRN exam.

The CMSRN exam is based on a job task analysis (JTA), conducted at least every five years. A JTA is necessary to validate the tasks medical-surgical registered nurses perform and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform these tasks competently to provide safe patient care.

MSNCB has several subcommittees and task forces that make up our Test Development Committee. These volunteers are medical-surgical nurses who hold the CMSRN credential and are considered subject matter experts (SMEs) in the practice. Our SMEs work alongside our test development partner to create the JTA survey, review the results of the survey, make recommended changes to the content of the exam, write exam questions, review the exam questions, review item statistics, and set the passing score. For full details about how the CMSRN exam is developed, see [Appendix B](#).

Maintain your records

MSNCB will retain electronic records of all candidates for at least five (5) years. It is your professional responsibility to notify MSNCB of any change in name, mailing address, phone number, and email address before testing.

Confidentiality

All application information is confidential and is not shared with any agency other than MSNCB and our test administrator, Prometric.

The test materials are confidential and will not be released to any person or agency.



Results of your exam attempt may only be released to third parties with your written consent. Participants in the FailSafe Certification Program grant the right to their employer to know the outcome of their exam attempts.

See CMSRN Certification Policies for more information about confidentiality.





Fees

Exam application fees are due at the time you submit your application. Applying for a CMSRN Certification Grant can help cover the costs of the exam. You might also encourage your facility to participate in the FailSafe Certification Program, or just ask them to pay for your exam!

Exam application fees

AMSN members receive a discount on the exam application fees. You must be a member of AMSN at the time you apply to receive the AMSN member exam fee. [Join AMSN today!](#)

	AMSN Member Fee	Standard Fee
Initial Exam	\$267	\$394
First-time Retake Exam	\$189	\$315

- ⌘ First-time retake discount is only active for one year following your first exam.
- ⌘ FailSafe applicants are not eligible for the retake discount.
- ⌘ All exam fees include a non-refundable processing fee of \$79.
- ⌘ Fees are subject to change without notice.

Pay nothing for the exam

Certification Grant

The CMSRN Certification Grant covers the full fee of the exam application. You must have been a member of AMSN for at least one year to be eligible. Grant applications are open all year.

[Apply for the Grant!](#)

FailSafe Certification Program

The FailSafe Certification Program allows CMSRN-eligible nurses at participating facilities the opportunity to apply for the CMSRN exam twice within a twelve (12) month period. The facility never pays for an unsuccessful exam attempt. See [FailSafe Certification Program](#) to learn how your employer can partner with MSNCB to pay for your exam.





We've provided the link below directly to the CMSRN exam application because we know you're probably ready to get started. Applications may be submitted at any time. Keep reading for a step-by-step guide to applying for the exam, requesting testing accommodations, and completing an exam application audit.

Apply for the CMSRN Exam!

IMPORTANT: Having an amsn.org account does **not** confer automatic membership in AMSN. To become an AMSN member, please go to [Join AMSN](#). Membership in AMSN is **not** required to earn the CMSRN.

Four things to have with you when you apply

1. The last 4 digits of your Social Security number
 - a. Enter 0000 if you do not have a United States Social Security number.
2. Your RN license number, original license issue date, current license expiration date, and the state, territory, or province you are licensed to practice in
3. A government-issued photo ID with a signature and expiration date.
 - a. The name on your ID must match the name on your exam application.
 - b. Your ID must be **either** unexpired **or** no more than 90 days expired on the day of your exam appointment.
4. Credit card information or the name of your FailSafe facility

Complete the application in less than ten steps!

1. **Access the application.**
 - a. Create a free account or log in to an existing account at amsn.org.
 - b. Select My Profile at the top of the screen.
 - c. From your Home page, select My Certification.
 - d. You will end up on the CMSRN Application Dashboard.
 - e. Start your application by clicking the orange "Begin" button.
2. **Select the application pathway.**
 - a. Click the orange "Select a Pathway" button.
 - b. Select "Apply by Examination."
3. **Validate RN License.**
 - a. Click the orange "Enter Details" button in the RN License or Foreign Equivalent section.
 - b. Use the drop-down menu to select the country where your Nursing License was issued. Applicants practicing outside of the United States or its territories and Canada should select "Other" for their License Country.
 - c. You will need to provide the following information: jurisdiction, nursing license number, license issue date and expiration date, and the last four digits of your SSN. Applicants



without an SSN can enter 0000 in the SSN field. Upload a copy of your nursing license. If you are applying with an international license, you will also need to upload a Credentials Evaluation.

- d. After you Submit, your Nursing License requirement will be completed at the top of your application.
4. **Enter Medical-Surgical Experience.**
 - a. In the Medical-Surgical Experience section, click the orange Enter Medical-Surgical Experience Details button. You may add more than one position with the blue Add Position button.
 - b. Enter information on your employer, position title, start and end date, hours per week in a med-surg setting, and supervisor's name and email.
 - c. You will fulfill the Medical-Surgical Experience requirements once you submit work experience that 1) spans at least two full years and 2) meets 1,000 practice hours within the last five years.
5. **Indicate FailSafe Certification Program Participation.**
 - a. If you belong to a FailSafe organization, begin typing in your employer's name and select their name from the dropdown list. Send the FailSafe Verification Request. If their name does not appear, they are not currently active in the FailSafe Certification Program.
 - b. If you do not belong to a FailSafe organization, click Self Pay.
6. **Submit!**
 - a. Click the orange Submit button at the top or bottom of the application.
 - b. Your AMSN membership status will be displayed on the first tab. Click Next.
 - c. Indicate whether you will require ADA Accommodations for the exam. See [ADA Testing Accommodations](#). Download the ADA Accommodation Request Form if test accommodations are requested. This form is to be filled out by you and a licensed physician, psychiatrist, or clinical psychologist. Upload and click Next.
 - d. Complete the Attestation. Click Continue.
7. **Pay fees.**
 - a. AMSN members receive discounts on all certification and recertification pathways. If you would like to become an AMSN member, follow the link provided. For your new membership status to be reflected, you will need to log out and back in.
 - b. Click Pay Fees to go to Check Out. Enter billing and credit card information. Select "Continue".
 - c. If your facility is paying through FailSafe, select "Continue with FailSafe".
8. **Confirmation.**
 - a. We will send you an email with the receipt for the exam after you submit your application. Your application is under review by MSNCB.
 - b. If you are a FailSafe applicant, your FailSafe facility will need to approve your application.
 - c. We randomly audit 10% of all exam applications. If you are audited, you will be asked to provide proof of meeting eligibility requirements. See [Audit of Exam Application](#).



Take the exam when you get your Authorization to Test

You will receive your **Authorization to Test** in a second email when you are approved to schedule. **You have ninety (90) days to take the exam from the time you receive your Authorization to Test.** You cannot use the scheduling portal in the last six (6) days of your 90-day test period.

IMPORTANT: If your test period expires and you have not taken an exam, you must contact us to request an extension. If you do not contact us within ten days of expiration, you will need to reapply and pay the full exam fees again. The exam fee for your expired registration will **not** be refunded.

FailSafe candidates are not eligible for extensions. See FailSafe for Test-Takers.

Please contact us if you do not receive your Authorization to Test and you have not been contacted by MSNCB within five (5) days of submitting your application.

Denial of certification

There are circumstances in which your application for the CMSRN certification may be denied. See [Appendix F](#) or CMSRN Certification Policies for more information.



ADA Testing Accommodations

MSNCB and our test administrator will provide reasonable and appropriate testing accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for individuals with documented disabilities.

The ADA ensures that individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to fairly pursue professional opportunities such as certification by requiring organizations such as MSNCB to offer the certification exam in an accessible manner. MSNCB is committed to allowing all test-takers the ability to demonstrate their true aptitude on the exam without their functional limitations affecting their performance in ways not related to the exam.

Testing accommodations for people with disabilities

Testing accommodations are changes to the regular testing environment and auxiliary aids and services that allow individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their true aptitude or achievement level on standardized exams.

Accommodations for individuals taking the exam via Live Remote Proctoring (also known as taking the exam at home) are the same for individuals taking the exam at test centers. If a unique request is made, MSNCB will seek prior approval from the testing agency.

Devices that have external communication capability such as cellular, wireless, or Bluetooth must be pre-authorized by MSNCB and our test administrator before you schedule your exam, or you may not be allowed to test on your test day.



Examples of testing accommodations include but are not limited to:

- ⌘ Hearing aid/cochlear implant
- ⌘ Mobility aids
- ⌘ Screen reading technology
- ⌘ Reasonable extension of testing time
- ⌘ Distraction-free rooms
- ⌘ Permission to bring and take medications
- ⌘ Personal reader provided by test administrator
- ⌘ Interpreter provided by test administrator

Qualifications for testing accommodations

Under the ADA, an individual with a disability is a) a person who has a physical or mental impairment that b) substantially limits a major life activity (e.g., seeing, hearing, learning, reading, concentrating, or thinking) or a major bodily function (e.g., the neurological, endocrine, or digestive system) as c) compared to the general population.

Anxiety solely in the testing context is not a disability under the ADA. However, impairments recognized by the ADA may include ADHD, generalized anxiety disorder, or a specific learning disability that warrant approval of testing accommodations.

Requests for testing accommodations based upon a temporary impairment (i.e., a broken leg) will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Request testing accommodations during the application

1. **Timeline.** Testing accommodation requests must be received at least forty-five (45) days before your desired test date.
2. **Request.** After you submit your application, you will be able to indicate that you will require ADA Accommodations for the exam.
3. **Form.** Download the ADA Accommodation Request Form provided on the ADA Accommodations tab. It is to be filled out by you and a licensed physician, psychiatrist, or clinical psychologist and uploaded at the time of your request. The professional evaluation must be a) less than three years old and b) made by a licensed individual who is qualified to diagnose the specific illness or disability.
 - a. Candidates who select the option for testing accommodations but do not respond to our requests for further information within thirty (30) days will not be allowed to take the exam. Your application will be denied, and you will be refunded the exam application fee minus the administrative processing fee.
4. **Decision.** MSNCB will approve/deny your test accommodations request within fifteen (15) days.
 - a. Please allow 3-4 weeks for testing accommodation arrangements and scheduling to be completed.
 - b. All reasonable attempts will be made by MSNCB to accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities. The content and validity of the exam may not be compromised by these accommodations. If we are unable to accommodate your request, you will be refunded the exam application fees minus the administrative processing fee.



5. **Schedule.** For some test accommodations, you may be required to call the test administrator to schedule your exam. In these instances, MSNCB will provide you with the number to call after your accommodations have been approved.

The Test Accommodation Request Form and any subsequent documents will not be disclosed to the testing administrator or any other individuals, including employers and supervisors of the test candidate. Exam results will not indicate the use of testing accommodations.





Audit of Exam Application

You will attest to submitting correct information during the application process. All RN licenses are verified by NURSYS. If MSNCB has any reason to believe you have not met eligibility requirements, your application may be flagged for audit.

MSNCB staff will audit 10% of randomly selected applications for initial certification to verify requirements are met. The audit includes verification of the RN license, employer verification of two-years of practice in a medical-surgical setting, and employer verification of 2,000 hours of nursing practice within the past 3 years in a medical-surgical setting.

Complete an audit of your exam application

1. **Notification.** You will be notified in writing by MSNCB within five (5) business days of submitting your initial certification application if you are selected for an audit.
2. **Verification.** We require the following information, submitted with your application, to process your audit:
 - a. Documentation to verify your RN license is unencumbered and will be unexpired throughout the entire 90-day test period,
 - b. The contact information for a supervisor who will attest to the following:
 - i. You are an RN with a current and unencumbered license,
 - ii. You have practiced two years as an RN in a medical-surgical setting,
 - iii. You have accrued 2,000 hours in medical-surgical practice within the last three (3) years as an RN.
3. **Inquiry.** If needed, requests for information will be sent to the applicant's primary email address. Please consistently check for communication from MSNCB, including your junk and spam folders, until the audit process is complete.
4. **Response.** It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all requested verification information is sent to MSNCB within a timely manner. Failure to respond to information requests within thirty (30) days will result in your application being denied. You will be provided a refund minus the administrative processing fee.
5. **Results.** You will receive an email with the results of your audit within ten (10) days of your documents being received and reviewed.
6. **Denial.** If any information in the application is found to be false, the applicant will be unable to continue in the certification process. No refund will be provided.
7. **Success.** If you successfully pass the audit, you will be able to continue with the certification process and receive your Authorization to Test.





Testing Policies and Procedures

The CMSRN exam is offered year-round, excluding holidays, at [Prometric](#) testing centers and via [ProProctor](#) Live Remote Proctoring (LRP).

Please fully read the following policies and procedures for taking the test at either a test center or via LRP **before** scheduling your exam. You will **not** be provided a refund of your exam application fee if you miss or are removed from an exam appointment due to failure to follow these policies and procedures.



Identification and Name

The identification and name requirements apply to exams taken at testing centers **and** via LRP.

Identification to bring with you to the exam

You must present a government-issued photo ID with a signature and expiration date on the day of your exam appointment. Your ID must be **either** unexpired **or** no more than ninety (90) days expired.

Whether or not you are a citizen of the country you are testing in, any of the following can be your primary form of ID:

-  Driver's license
-  Military ID card
-  Passport
-  National identification card

Name on ID must match name on exam application

Your ID name must match your exam application name. Only MSNCB can change the name in your exam application after you submit it. You must contact us two (2) weeks in advance of your exam appointment with supporting documentation for the name change.



Prometric Testing Centers

The CMSRN exam is delivered by computer at thousands of Prometric testing centers across the United States and around the world. Most metropolitan areas have at least one Prometric testing center that offers the exam three to four days per week and one to two times per day. Prometric does not offer a list of open testing centers. If you want to know test center locations before you apply for the exam, please contact us and we will locate your closest testing center.

Take time to review [Test Center Policies](#) to understand all day-of-testing requirements.



Prometric will contact you if your test site is closed

Occasionally, Prometric may need to temporarily close a testing site for various reasons including unforeseen events, such as extreme weather, natural disaster, power outages, technical issues, pandemic impacts, or other circumstances.

Prometric will contact you directly to inform you of the closure and to reschedule your exam appointment if your test center closes and your appointment is canceled. You may also visit [Prometric Test Center Closures](#) to view closures. Contact us if you encounter any problems with this process.



ProProctor Live Remote Proctoring

Live remote proctoring allows you to launch the exam online via computer at a secure location of your choice. Prometric's proctors are there for you in real-time to assist with any problems you may encounter and to maintain the security and integrity of the exam.

Please review the [ProProctor User Guide](#) for the most up to date information about remote proctored exams, including system requirements, environmental requirements, and check-in procedures.

Verify your computer meets system requirements

Verify your computer's operating system can install and run the ProProctor application with the [System Readiness Check](#). You will not be able to complete Step 2, downloading the ProProctor application, until you have scheduled an exam appointment.

Please also be sure you have the necessary permissions to install software on your computer. If you are taking the exam on a work computer, please check with your network administrator.

IMPORTANT: To ensure a seamless security check-in process, Prometric requires that you take your test using **an undocked computer with a movable web-camera**. Your Readiness Agent will ask you to provide a 360° view of your environment.

Install the ProProctor application

Download and install the [ProProctor Application](#) before test day. The [ProProctor User Guide](#) has instructions for how to download the application if it is blocked by your computer's firewall.



Set aside five hours for an LRP exam

Choose an exam date where you will have five (5) hours of free time. Your actual time in the exam will only be three (3) hours, but the security check-in process can take up to a thirty (30) minutes and internet connections may disrupt the exam process.

Three steps to complete before test day

Before test day, you should do the following:

- 🔗 Complete the [System Readiness Check](#) (Step 1).
- 🔗 Download and install the [ProProctor Application](#) (Step 2, cannot be completed until you schedule your exam and have a confirmation number).
- 🔗 Read the [ProProctor User Guide](#) to understand all check-in and security procedures.

Start a remote proctored exam

Go to [ProProctor Launch Exam](#) and enter your confirmation number and the first four (4) letters of your surname thirty (30) minutes before the start of your exam appointment. Select “Find” and you will be connected to a Readiness Agent within a few minutes.

Contact Prometric Support first with technical problems during LRP exam

If you encounter any technical problems during your remote proctored exam, please reach out to your Readiness Agent or Prometric Proctor. If you are disconnected from the agent or proctor, then please first contact [Prometric Support](#) for help. If they are unable to help you, then contact us within ten (10) days of your exam appointment or your exam application fees will be forfeit.





Schedule, Reschedule, Extend, or Withdraw

IMPORTANT: You have ninety (90) days to take the exam from the time you receive your Authorization to Test. Don't wait too long to schedule! You cannot use the scheduling portal in the last six (6) days of your test period.

Please read [Testing Policies and Procedures](#) before you schedule your exam. Remember to give yourself enough time to study, too. Study resources can be found in [Studying for the Exam](#).



Schedule Exam

You can choose your test center location, test date and time through the Prometric scheduling portal.

Schedule your exam

- 1. Access the Scheduling Portal.**
 - a. After you submit your application, you will receive an email notifying you of your Authorization to Test. A link to the Prometric Scheduling Portal will be provided in the email.
 - b. Otherwise, log in to your account at amsn.org and select My Profile at the top of the screen. On your Home page, select My Certification. In your application, you will see an orange "Manage Exam" button. This will open up a window from which you can go to the Prometric Scheduling Portal.
- 2. Schedule.** In the portal, choose Schedule CMSRN Exam – At a Test Center or Schedule CMSRN Exam – Remote Proctored.
 - a. You may be asked to enter an eligibility ID. This number should populate in the required field, but if it doesn't, your eligibility ID is the invoice number in your emailed receipt.
 - b. You'll be able to search for an exam date within a two-week time frame in any location of your choice. If you don't see any dates you like, then choose a different week within your 90-day test period. We recommend you search in 5-day increments.
- 3. Confirmation.** Prometric will email you an exam confirmation number after you schedule your exam. Write down your confirmation number and save it. You will need it to take the exam.

One exam for one exam registration

You may only test once during your test period. Your test period ends after your exam appointment, whether or not you took the exam.





Reschedule or Cancel Exam

You may need to pay a fee to reschedule or cancel your exam. The table below will help you determine this fee depending on how many days there are until your exam appointment.

Days Before Exam	Fee to Reschedule or Cancel
Over 15	Free
7 to 15	\$25, paid to Prometric
6 or less	Contact MSNCB for \$79 extension

Reschedule your exam

1. You **cannot** reschedule an exam within six days of your already scheduled exam appointment. Request an extension instead.
2. **Access the application.**
 - a. Log in to an existing account at amsn.org and select Profile at the top of the page,
 - b. Under My Account Links on your profile, select Certification Applications.
3. **Scheduling Portal.** Select a purple button that says Step 3: Exam Appointment Scheduling in the top right corner of your Dashboard. This will take you to the Prometric scheduling portal.
4. **Reschedule.** Choose Reschedule CMSRN Exam At a Test Center or Reschedule CMSRN Exam Remote Proctored Appointment.
 - a. Enter the confirmation number for your currently scheduled exam.
 - b. You'll be able to search for an exam date within a two-week time frame in any location of your choice. If you don't see any dates you like, then choose a different week within your 90-day test period. We recommend you search in 5-day increments.
5. **Confirmation.** Prometric will email you an exam confirmation number after you reschedule your exam. Write down your confirmation number and save it. You will need it to take the exam.

Cancel your exam

1. **Do not** cancel your exam if it is scheduled in the next six days. Request an extension instead.
2. **Access the application.**
 - a. Log in to an existing account at amsn.org and select Profile at the top of the page,
 - b. Under My Account Links on your profile, select Certification Applications.
3. **Scheduling Portal.** Select a purple button that says Step 3: Exam Appointment Scheduling in the top right corner of your Dashboard. This will take you to the Prometric scheduling portal.
4. **Cancel.** Choose Cancel CMSRN Exam.
 - a. Enter the confirmation number for your currently scheduled exam.
 - b. Follow the prompts to cancel your exam.



Cancelling your exam application will **not** automatically result in a refund of your exam application fees. See [Withdraw CMSRN Application](#) for refunds and withdrawals.



Missed Exams and Expired Test Periods

We understand life happens, and sometimes you can't make a scheduled exam appointment or you forget to schedule an exam. In those cases, you can request an extension of your 90-day test period.

Request an extension for three reasons

- You cannot attend an exam happening in 6 days or less.
- You miss a scheduled exam.
- Your 90-day test period expired and you didn't schedule an exam.

Contact us within 10 days of a missed exam or expired test period

You must request an extension within ten (10) days of a missed exam or the expiration of your test period. Your exam application fee will **not** be refunded and you will have to reapply for the exam and pay full fees again if you miss this 10 day deadline.

Contact us at certification@msncb.org to request an extension.

Cost of extension is \$79

The cost for an extension is \$79 and is non-refundable. You will only be charged if your extension is approved.

If you miss an exam or are unable to schedule through no fault of your own, you may request a no-fee extension. Supporting documentation may be required.

One extension for one exam registration

You may only have one extension for each exam registration.

FailSafe applicants are not eligible for extensions

FailSafe applicants cannot receive an extension. If you miss an exam or are unable to schedule during your test period, see [FailSafe for Test-Takers](#).



Withdraw CMSRN Application

You **cannot** withdraw your CMSRN application if you have an exam scheduled in the next six days.

Cancel any other scheduled exam before you request to withdraw your CMSRN application. [Learn how to cancel your exam](#). Then, contact us to request a refund. All exam fees include a non-refundable \$79 processing fee, no exceptions.

We review refund requests on a case-by-case basis. Supporting documentation must be provided.





Studying for the Exam

It's time to prep for the CMSRN exam! We have compiled a diverse collection of prep materials for every kind of learner. The Prep Test is a fun, interactive way to check your skill set, and we also offer the Certification Review Course – take it online or have your facility bring it to a location near you.

We offer free learning aides such as the exam blueprint, sample test questions, and our resource list. See below for all the support we offer you, to help you be your best on test day!

For a complete list of references used in the development of the CMSRN exam, please see [Appendix C](#).

IMPORTANT: These resources do not include actual examination questions and are not a requirement to sit for the actual CMSRN certification examination. These resources are not the only or preferred route to adequate preparation. Using these study resources does not imply advantage or successful performance on the examination.



Certification Review Course

Take the Certification Review Course (CRC) to prepare for the CMSRN exam. This course is a thorough, interactive review of the most common diseases, symptoms, and issues seen in patients by med-surg nurses, along with the respective required nursing assessments and interventions. There are several options for how and where you can take the CRC, including at a self-directed pace online or in-person at a facility near you.

eLearning Certification Review Course for Individuals

If you are looking to set your own pace for studying, AMSN offers the eLearning CRC. These lessons include practice questions at the end of each section like those found on the CMSRN certification exam. Upon completion of the course, you also earn 20.5 NCPDs. See [Appendix D](#) to learn about your contact hour accrual period.

Buy the eLearning CRC!



eLearning Certification Review Course for Facilities

Facilities may purchase licenses to the eLearning CRC. The site license offers multiple nurses at your facility access to the eLearning CRC at a quantity discount. Cost savings increase as the number of users increase!

[Buy the eLearning CRC Site License!](#)

Live and Virtual Certification Review Course

AMSN offers a live CRC and a virtual CRC, which bring a certification expert to you! This two-day course is a great way for facilities to prepare their med-surg nurses for the exam. This course covers a variety of medical issues med-surg nurses handle as well as test preparation strategies. It is a great opportunity to encourage unity and excitement for certification and provides test-takers the chance to ask all their questions to an expert.

Upon completion of the course, attendees complete an evaluation to earn 14 NCPDs. See [Appendix D](#) to learn about the contact hour accrual period.

AMSN provides coordinator support for the event so that your administration time is limited and budgeting is easy. If you are interested in hosting a live or virtual CRC for your med-surg nurses, contact us at crc@amsn.org. We'd love to hear from you!



Review Books

Core Curriculum

The Core Curriculum for Medical-Surgical Nursing is your go-to guide for medical-surgical nursing best practices and exam preparation. The Core Curriculum is a great in-depth resource for residency programs and new nurses that will help them prepare for bedside nursing and their boards.

For bulk orders, please contact amsn@amsn.org.

[Buy the Core Curriculum!](#)



Free Resources

Exam Blueprint

Learn about the practice domains in the CMSRN exam by reviewing the exam blueprint.

[CMSRN Exam Blueprint](#)

Sample Exam Questions

If you're curious about the kinds of questions that will appear on the CMSRN exam, this free resource is for you!

[Sample Questions](#)

Exam Topics

Visit our extensive topics page to explore educational content related to body systems and practice and patient management.

[Exam Topics](#)





Results

You will find out if you passed or failed the exam immediately after completing the exam. We will receive your exam score within five (5) days.

Score Report

The test administrator will send you a Score Report within 24 hours of completing the exam. The score report provides you with your overall standard score and a breakdown of your performance in the five different domains of the CMSRN Blueprint.

Retake the exam

A new application is required to retake the exam. If you did not pass the exam, you will be able to apply for another exam as soon as we receive your score and send you an email about reapplying. You will receive a discount on your reapplication within one year of your first attempt if this is your first time retaking the exam and you are not a FailSafe applicant.

Pass the exam

If you pass the exam, congratulations! You will be sent a CMSRN lapel pin in the mail, which may take about forty-five (45) days to reach you.

I'm certified, now what?

Now that you're CMSRN certified, read up on how to [verify your credential](#), [volunteer with MSNCB](#), and [maintain your credential](#). It's never too early to come up with a plan for recertification!





FAILSAFE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The FailSafe Certification Program allows CMSRN-eligible nurses at participating facilities to apply for the CMSRN exam twice within a twelve (12) month period, while only paying for the first attempt.



FailSafe for Organizations

The FailSafe Certification Program can help set your nurses up for success, with a safety net!

3, 5, or 10 nurse applicants

Your organization can purchase vouchers at three tiers: 3, 5, or 10 nurses can use these vouchers to apply for the CMSRN exam within your contract year. If your organization is unable to assign all vouchers within the year, then you can purchase additional vouchers for the next year and rollover unused vouchers. You can also purchase additional vouchers within the same year.

Voucher Tier	Cost
3	\$1,182
5	\$1,970
10	\$3,940

Nurses can take exam twice

Each nurse has two attempts to pass the exam within your organization's contract year. For additional attempts, another voucher will need to be distributed to the nurse.

Cost of a voucher

- Each voucher represents the cost of one test
- Second attempts are at no cost**

Cost of a missed exam or expired test period

If a nurse misses their exam or does not schedule within their test period, then they forfeit their assigned voucher.

Reassign your vouchers

If a nurse contacts us at least ten (10) days prior to missing their exam or letting their test period expire, we can grant them an extension or you can reassign their voucher to someone else.

Are there any other perks?

Yes! FailSafe organizations receive a tiered discount on the live or virtual [Certification Review Course](#) based on their voucher level.



Voucher Tier	CRC Discount
3	5%
5	10%
10	15%

Stay tuned for updates on the FailSafe Certification Program

Current and interested organizations, please watch MSNCB communications for information on the opening of the new FailSafe Certification Program.



FailSafe for Test-Takers

Medical-surgical nurses who meet the CMSRN eligibility requirements and are employees of an organization with an active FailSafe Certification Program contract may participate in the program. Individuals or independent groups of nurses are not eligible to apply through the FailSafe Certification Program.

Apply your voucher for your first test

Once your organization receives their vouchers, your FailSafe Coordinator will share with you your individual voucher number. While the new FailSafe Program is still being built out, current FailSafe Program participants should apply to take the CMSRN exam following the instructions outlined in [Complete the application in ten steps](#). The process of scheduling, rescheduling, and cancelling your exam are the same as for non-FailSafe applicants.

Apply your voucher for your second test

If you fail your first attempt, your organization will need to verify that you are a FailSafe Program participant. You will apply for the retake and select your organization from a dropdown menu to signify that you are a FailSafe Program participant. Once your FailSafe Coordinator verifies your participation, you will be able to schedule your test. If you do not know who your organization's FailSafe administrator is, then contact failsafe@msncb.org.

Contact us within 10 days before your exam or expired test period

If you miss your exam or let your 90-day test period expire without taking the exam, then you forfeit your voucher. You may contact us prior to the exam or end of the test period to request an extension.

Wait or self-pay if you use both exam attempts without passing

If you use both of your exam attempts and do not pass the exam, then you have two options:

1. Wait and see if your organization renews their FailSafe Certification Program contract for another twelve (12) months.
2. Pay for the exam yourself and take it again immediately.



Employer provided results of exam attempt

You grant the right to your employer to know the outcome of your exam attempts by participating in the FailSafe Certification Program.





USE THE CMSRN

Congratulations on earning the CMSRN credential! Learn what to do with your CMSRN credential now that you have it, how to verify your credential, and how to get involved with MSNCB.

Your credential is active for five years

Your initial certification period begins on the first day of the month in which you pass the certification exam and is active for five (5) years. For example, if you passed the exam on August 15, 2018, then your certification period would be active from August 1, 2018 through July 31, 2023.

When you recertify, any subsequent certification period is also active for five (5) years.

Display your credential proudly

The CMSRN mark is federally registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Nurses certified for the CMSRN by MSNCB may use the following in all correspondence or professional relations:

CMSRN® - Certified Medical-Surgical Registered Nurse.

- 🔗 Wear your CMSRN lapel pin
- 🔗 Print and display your certificate in your unit or office
- 🔗 Include your credential when you sign your name in a professional capacity
- 🔗 Print your credential on your business card, resume, and other professional materials

Suspension or revocation of certification

There are circumstances in which your CMSRN certification may be suspended or revoked. Please see [Appendix F](#) or CMSRN Certification Policies for more information.

Plan for recertification

You'll want to decide on a recertification method early on in your certification period. If you choose to recertify by contact hours, you'll need to continuously earn contact hours throughout your entire five-year certification period.

Activities to improve your practice

The following activities promote life-long learning, curiosity, and engagement. Bonus: you can earn contact hours towards recertification, and they may help you climb the clinical ladder.

- 🔗 Complete continuing education
- 🔗 Precept or mentor new RNs
- 🔗 Enroll in an academic nursing degree program
- 🔗 Conduct nursing research through evidence-based practice programs
- 🔗 Present a poster about nursing at a conference
- 🔗 Become a member of an MSNCB Committee
- 🔗 Join AMSN and become a member of an AMSN Committee





Verify the Credential

As a CMSRN, you'll want proof of your accomplishment. Current and potential employers will also want to verify certifications.



Verification

Independent verification available with your consent

Current or potential employers, among other third parties, may request independent verification of your certification. We will only provide your certification status to third parties with your written consent. If you are enrolled in the FailSafe Certification Program, you grant the right to your employer to know the outcome of your exam attempts.

We provide proof of certification on MSNCB letterhead by request. To request certification verification, contact us at certification@msncb.org.



Volunteer

Get involved! Look for an annual email in early autumn that calls for volunteers. You could be our next item writer or auditor. Committee members have regular, ongoing responsibilities as defined by their Committee Charter. Members must hold a valid CMSRN credential.

Recertification Committee

Members of the Recertification Committee review recertification applications randomly selected for audit. You need about 3-4 hours monthly to review 1-4 audited recertification applications, subject to fluctuation based on the volume of recertifications and availability of committee members. You make a commitment to complete assigned audits with a quick turnaround by participating in this committee.

Item Writers Committee

Members of the Item Writers Committee develop new exam items for the CMSRN exam following the CMSRN Style Guide and using references provided by MSNCB. This group receives item writing training from our test development vendor. Committee members are given independent assignments twice per year. Assignments typically span a 2-3 week period to accommodate your personal and work schedules.

Item Reviewers Committee

Members of the Item Reviewers Committee review each item in the item bank and make necessary revisions to items following the CMSRN Style Guide and using references provided by MSNCB. This group receives item writing and reviewing training from our test development vendor. Committee



members are given independent assignments twice per year. After each assignment, members attend daily virtual meetings for one week that last 1-3 hours each day.

Test Development Committee

Members of the Test Development Committee review the performance of each exam form, problematic items, and standard setting and cut scores for the CMSRN exam. Committee members are given independent assignments 3-4 times per year. After each assignment, members attend virtual meetings for 1-3 days that last 1-3 hours each day.





Your CMSRN certification is valid for five years. During those five years, we recommend you continue to learn and engage with professional development opportunities, especially those that have to do with medical-surgical nursing. You'll see better patient outcomes, improved job satisfaction, and you'll set yourself up to easily recertify.



About Recertification

You need a periodic assessment of competence to improve your practice, because standards of practice are constantly changing. Recertification is the requirements and procedures established as part of a certification program that certificants must meet to maintain competence and renew their certification (Institute for Credentialing Excellence).

Certification period is for five years

The CMSRN credential is valid for five (5) years. You may submit your recertification application starting in the fourth year of your certification period.

Meet requirements, submit application, and pay fees to recertify

To recertify, you must meet the eligibility requirements for your chosen recertification method, submit a recertification application, and pay the appropriate fees within the appropriate timeline for your chosen method. See [Choose How to Recertify](#) for specific instructions.

Recertify after your credential is expired

You are within your grace period in the year following your certification expiration date. You may only recertify by contact hours during your grace period. See [Appendix D](#) to learn how recertifying in your grace period can alter your contact hour accrual period.

If you want to take the exam during your grace period, please be aware that your new certification period will begin the first day of the month in which you pass the exam.

If your CMSRN credential has been expired for more than one year, you can only regain the CMSRN credential through the exam process and meeting eligibility requirements for initial certification.

Maintain your records

MSNCB will retain electronic records of all certificants for at least five (5) years. It is your professional responsibility to notify MSNCB of any change in name, mailing address, phone number, and email address during your certification period.





Fees

Recertification application fees and fees for alternatives to recertification are due at the time you submit your application. Applying for a CMSRN Recertification Grant can help cover the costs of recertification.

Recertification application fees

	AMSN Member Fee	Standard Fee
Recertify by Contact Hours	\$193	\$303
Recertify by Exam	\$267	\$394
MEDSURG-BC to CMSRN	\$193	\$303

- ⌘ The fees for recertification are non-refundable, even if you decline or fail the audit.
- ⌘ There is a \$79 late fee for applications submitted after your certification expiration date.
- ⌘ Fees are subject to change without notice.

Fees for alternatives to recertification

	AMSN Member Fee	Standard Fee
Inactive Status	\$105	\$165
Emeritus Status	\$75	\$100

- ⌘ Applications for Inactive Status and Emeritus Status are not accepted after your certification expiration date.
- ⌘ Fees are subject to change without notice.

Recertification Grant

The CMSRN Recertification Grant covers the full fee of the recertification application. You must have been a member of AMSN for at least one year to be eligible. Grant applications are open all year.

[Apply for the Grant!](#)





Choose How to Recertify

There are three ways to recertify. You can recertify by contact hours, recertify by exam, or transfer a MEDSURG-BC to a CMSRN.



Recertify by Contact Hours

Our most popular method of recertification is recertification by contact hours. Contact hours can be earned by completing continuing education and professional activities. You will document those activities in your recertification application, which will open as soon as you become certified. You need ninety (90) verified contact hours earned during your accrual period to recertify, and at least sixty-eight (68) of those 90 verified contact hours must be related to medical-surgical nursing. See [Appendix D](#) and [Appendix E](#) to learn about contact hours, your accrual period, and more.

Four eligibility requirements to recertify by contact hours

You are eligible to apply for recertification by contact hours if you meet the following criteria:

1. Hold a current CMSRN certification that expires within one year **or** You had a CMSRN certification that has been expired for less than one year.
2. Hold an unencumbered and current license as a Registered Nurse (RN) in the United States or its territories.
 - A nursing license held outside the United States must be verified for equivalency by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS).
3. Have accrued 1,000 practice hours in a medical-surgical setting during your 5-year certification period. Practice may be as a clinical nurse, as a manager, or as an educator.
 - Alternatively, you may also submit documentation signed by a school official verifying full-time status and matriculation as an RN student in a nursing baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degree program.
4. Have earned ninety (90) verified contact hours during your 5-year certification period. Sixty-eight (68) contact hours must be related to medical-surgical nursing.

Apply for recertification by contact hours in five steps

1. **Application.** Access the recertification application.
 - a. Log in to your existing account at amsn.org,
 - b. Select My Profile at the top of the screen,
 - c. On your Home page, select My Certification.
 - d. This will bring you to the Dashboard of your recertification application. Under In Progress Applications, select Begin on your Recertification Application. Your application is set to the contact hours pathway by default.



2. **Enter License Details.** In the RN License or Foreign Equivalent section, follow the prompts to enter your RN license information.
3. **MedSurg Experience.** Add work experience details to the Medical-Surgical Experience section.
 - a. You will fulfill the Medical-Surgical Experience requirements once you submit work experience that 1) spans at least two full years and 2) meets 1,000 practice hours within the last five years.
4. **Self-Reported Contact Hours.**
 - a. Select Add Contact Hours to add a new contact hours activity. Then, select the appropriate contact hours category. You may view each activity type description by clicking on the arrow to the left of the activity title.
 - b. Select Activity Details to enter the title of the activity, contact hours designation, education provider, and completion date. On the next tab, enter the number of contact hours requested. On the final tab, upload supporting documentation which fits the description provided.
 - c. Submit and repeat for each contact hours entry. We recommend that you enter contact hours as you earn them throughout your certification period.
 - d. Once you have ninety (90) contact hours submitted in your application and sixty-eight (68) of them are designated as medical-surgical, the contact hours requirement bars will indicate that this requirement has been completed.
5. **Submit.** Once all the requirements are fulfilled, you will be able to press the orange Submit button at the top or bottom of the page. Select this to pay for and submit your recertification application.
 - a. AMSN members receive discounts on all certification and recertification pathways. If you would like to become an AMSN member, follow the link provided. For your new membership status to be reflected, you will need to log out and back in.

Keep contact hour documentation in case of audit

MSNCB performs a random audit of 10% of all recertification applications. The fees for recertification are non-refundable, even if you decline or fail the recertification audit. You will need to submit appropriate supporting documentation for each contact hour entry before you submit your recertification application. We recommend reviewing [Appendix D](#) to learn what documentation you will need for your contact hours. These documents are reviewed in the case that you are audited.

If you are selected for audit, you will be notified via email. A member of the MSNCB Recertification Committee will contact you within ten (10) days of submission if your recertification application is deficient. If the auditors find that any of your contact hours are not acceptable, you will be given the opportunity to respond to their inquiries and/or earn more hours within a thirty (30) day period after their review.

Recertification approval within five days of submission

Once a decision has been made regarding your application, you will receive an email notification. If you do not hear from the Credentialing Team *and* you don't receive an updated digital badge within ten (10) days of submitting your recertification application, please contact us.





Recertify by Exam

You can choose to take the exam again to recertify if you haven't earned enough contact hours during your accrual period to recertify by contact hours.

Three eligibility requirements to recertify by exam

1. Hold a current CMSRN certification that expires within one year. You may **not** recertify by exam during your grace period.
2. Hold an unencumbered and current license as a Registered Nurse (RN) in the United States or its territories.
 - A nursing license held outside the United States must be verified for equivalency by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS).
3. Have accrued 2,000 practice hours in a medical-surgical setting in the last three (3) years. Practice may be as a clinical nurse, as a manager, or as an educator.

Apply to recertify by exam in eight steps

1. **Application.** Access the recertification application.
 - a. Log in to your existing account at amsn.org,
 - b. Select My Profile at the top of the screen,
 - c. On your Home page, select My Certification.
 - d. This will bring you to the Dashboard of your recertification application. Under In Progress Applications, select Begin on your Recertification Application. Your application is set to the contact hours pathway by default. Click the three dots icon to the right of the Recertification Pathway selection, then click Change My Answer to select Apply by Exam.
2. **Enter License Details.** In the RN License or Foreign Equivalent section, follow the prompts to enter your RN license information.
3. **MedSurg Experience.** Add work experience details to the Medical-Surgical Experience section.
 - a. You will fulfill the Medical-Surgical Experience requirements once you submit work experience that 1) spans at least two full years and 2) meets 1,000 practice hours within the last five years.
4. **Indicate FailSafe Certification Program Participation.**
 - a. If you belong to a FailSafe organization, begin typing in your employer's name and select their name from the dropdown list. Send the FailSafe Verification Request. If their name does not appear, they are not currently active in the FailSafe Certification Program.
 - b. If you do not belong to a FailSafe organization, click Self Pay.
5. **Submit!**
 - a. Click the orange Submit button at the top or bottom of the application.
 - b. Your AMSN membership status will be displayed on the first tab. Click Next.
 - c. Indicate whether you will require ADA Accommodations for the exam. See [ADA Testing Accommodations](#). Download the ADA Accommodation Request Form if test accommodations are requested. This form is to be filled out by you and a licensed physician, psychiatrist, or clinical psychologist. Upload and click Next.
 - d. Complete the Attestation. Click Continue.
6. **Pay fees.**



- a. AMSN members receive discounts on all certification and recertification pathways. If you would like to become an AMSN member, follow the link provided. For your new membership status to be reflected, you will need to log out and back in.
 - b. Click Pay Fees to go to Check Out. Enter billing and credit card information. Select “Continue”.
 - c. If your facility is paying through FailSafe, select “Continue with FailSafe”.
7. **Confirmation.** You’ll receive an email with the receipt for the exam to confirm we have received your application. Your application is now under review by MSNCB. If you are a FailSafe applicant, your FailSafe facility will need to approve your application.
 8. **ATT.** You will receive your **Authorization to Test** in a second email when you are approved to schedule your exam. You have 90 days to take the exam from the time you receive your Authorization to Test.

Pass the exam to recertify

Read [Exam](#) thoroughly to understand all essential information you will need to know about taking the exam.



Transfer MEDSURG-BC to CMSRN

If you hold a MEDSURG-BC from the American Nurses’ Credentialing Center (ANCC), you may be eligible to apply for the CMSRN without having to take the exam. You do **not** have to give up your MEDSURG-BC to also become CMSRN certified.

Four eligibility requirements to transfer MEDSURG-BC to CMSRN

1. Hold a current certification in medical-surgical nursing from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) that expires within one year **OR** You had a certification in medical-surgical nursing from the ANCC that has been expired for less than one year. Proof of current or lapsed certification required.
2. Hold an unencumbered and current license as a Registered Nurse (RN) in the United States or its territories.
 - A nursing license held outside the United States must be verified for equivalency by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS).
3. Have accrued 1,000 practice hours in a medical-surgical setting in the last 5 years. Practice may be as a clinical nurse, as a manager, or as an educator.
 - Alternatively, you may also submit documentation signed by a school official verifying full-time status and matriculation as an RN student in a nursing baccalaureate, master’s or doctoral degree program.
4. Have earned ninety (90) verified contact hours in the last 5 years. Sixty-eight (68) contact hours must be related to medical-surgical nursing.

Apply to transfer a MEDSURG-BC in seven steps

1. **Access the application.**
 - a. Create a free account or log in to an existing account at amsn.org.



- b. Select My Profile at the top of the screen.
 - c. From your Home page, select My Certification.
 - d. You will end up on the CMSRN Application Dashboard. Start your application by clicking the orange “Begin” button.
2. **Select the application pathway.**
 - a. Click the orange “Select a Pathway” button.
 - b. Select “MEDSURG-BC.”
3. **Validate RN License.** Click the orange “Enter Details” button in the RN License or Foreign Equivalent section and provide the requested information.
4. **MEDSURG-BC Certificate.** Add your certification details and upload your MEDSURG-BC certificate.
5. **MedSurg Experience.** Add work experience details to the Medical-Surgical Experience section.
 - a. You will fulfill the Medical-Surgical Experience requirements once you submit work experience that 1) spans at least two full years and 2) meets 1,000 practice hours within the last five years.
6. **Self-Reported Contact Hours.**
 - a. Select Add Contact Hours to add a new contact hours activity. Then, select the appropriate contact hours category. You may view each activity type description by clicking on the arrow to the left of the activity title.
 - b. Select Activity Details to enter the title of the activity, contact hours designation, education provider, and completion date. On the next tab, enter the number of contact hours requested. On the final tab, upload supporting documentation which fits the description provided.
 - c. Submit and repeat for each contact hours entry. We recommend that you enter contact hours as you earn them throughout your certification period.
 - d. Once you have ninety (90) contact hours submitted in your application and sixty-eight (68) of them are designated as medical-surgical, the contact hours requirement bars will indicate that this requirement has been completed.
7. **Submit.** Once all the requirements are fulfilled, you will be able to press the orange Submit button at the top or bottom of the page. Select this to pay for and submit your MEDSURG-BC transfer application.
 - a. AMSN members receive discounts on all certification and recertification pathways. If you would like to become an AMSN member, follow the link provided. For your new membership status to be reflected, you will need to log out and back in.



Alternatives to Recertification

The options to apply for Emeritus Status or Inactive Status are in your recertification application.

1. Log in to your existing account at amsn.org and select My Profile at the top of the screen.
2. From your Home page, select Certification Applications.



3. This will bring you to the Dashboard of your recertification application. Under In Progress Applications, select Begin on your Recertification Application.
4. Your application is set to the contact hours pathway by default. Click the three dots icon to the right of the Recertification Pathway selection, then click Change My Answer to select either Emeritus or Inactive Status.



Emeritus Status

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.

Apply for Emeritus status before your credential expires

1. Hold a current CMSRN credential.
2. Have retired within your five (5) year current certification period.
3. Submit your application for Emeritus status before the expiration of your current certification.

Reinstate the CMSRN if you rejoin the work force

Reinstatement of CMSRN within three (3) years of receiving Emeritus status

If you are an Emeritus Status nurse who re-enters the workforce within three (3) years from the date you received Emeritus status and you wish to reinstate the full CMSRN credential, you must meet eligibility criteria to recertify by contact hours with a lapsed CMSRN credential, submit the application, and pay all appropriate fees.

If approved, your new certification period will be effective for five (5) years from time of reinstatement.

Reinstatement of CMSRN over three (3) years after receiving Emeritus status

If you are an Emeritus Status nurse who re-enters the workforce over three (3) years after the date you received Emeritus status, you cannot reinstate the full CMSRN credential through the recertification process. Instead, you must regain the credential through the examination process, meeting all initial certification eligibility requirements and paying all appropriate fees, and achieving a passing score on the exam.

Your new certification period will be effective for five (5) years from the first day of the month in which you pass the exam.



Inactive Status

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



Apply for Inactive status before your credential expires

1. Hold a current CMSRN credential
2. Submit an Inactive Status application, the appropriate fee, and a letter requesting Inactive Status and detailing the reasons for the request at least thirty (30) days before the expiration of your current certification.

Reactivate the CMSRN within three years

Reactivation of CMSRN within three (3) years of receiving Inactive Status

To reactivate your certification, you must meet eligibility criteria to recertify by contact hours with a lapsed CMSRN credential, submit the application, and pay all appropriate fees.

If approved, your new certification period will be effective for five (5) years from the time of reactivation.

Reactivation of CMSRN over three (3) years after receiving Inactive Status

You cannot reactivate your certification over three (3) years after receiving Inactive Status. Instead, you must regain the credential through the examination process, meeting all initial certification eligibility requirements and paying all appropriate fees, and achieving a passing score on the exam.

Your new certification period will be effective for five (5) years from the first day of the month in which you pass the exam.



Appendix A: Domains of Med-Surg Nursing Practice

2023 CMSRN Exam Blueprint

Domain	Percentage Weight	Number of Items on Test
Patient/Care Management	32%	40
Holistic Patient Care	15%	19
Elements of Interprofessional Care	17%	21
Professional Concepts	15%	19
Nursing Teamwork and Collaboration	21%	26
Total	100%	125

The following table identifies the percentage and number of questions from each domain that will appear on the CMSRN exam as of May 15, 2023.



Domain	Percentage Weight	Number of Items on Test
Patient/Care Management	32%	40 Items
Patient Safety	1. Nursing process - assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, evaluation	
	2. Patient safety protocols (e.g., skin, falls, restraints, rounding, suicide)	
	3. Risk factors (e.g., pharmacological, environment, equipment, demographics)	
	4. Patient safety culture (e.g., near miss reporting, "just culture", "speak up", high accountable organizations)	
	5. Care bundles (e.g., checklist, algorithms)	
	6. Patient safety assessments and reporting (e.g., abuse, human trafficking, social determinants)	
	7. Risk assessment methods (e.g., Root Cause Analysis [RCA], Failure Mode and Effects Analysis [FMEA], safety rounds, safety huddles)	
Infection Prevention	1. Universal and transmission-based precautions	
	2. Infection control practices and standards	
	3. Current evidence-based practice for infection control and prevention procedures	
	4. Antimicrobial stewardship (e.g., surgical scrub, antibiotics, probiotics)	
Medication Management	1. Safe medication administration practices (e.g., interaction, adverse reaction, intravenous therapy)	
	2. Patient medication education	
	3. Polypharmacy	
	4. Safe drug management and disposal (e.g., stewardship, home medication management)	
	5. Advanced access devices (i.e., ports, central lines, epidurals)	
	6. Financial implications to patients	
Pain Management	1. Chronic and/or acute pain management (e.g., pharmacological, non-pharmacological, multimodal)	
	2. Patient pain management expectations	
	3. Patient advocacy	
Non-Pharmacological Interventions	1. Non-pharmacological interventions (e.g., repositioning, heat or cold)	
	2. Complementary and alternative therapies (e.g., acupuncture, aromatherapy)	
Surgical/Procedural Nursing Management	1. Pre- and post-procedural unit standards (e.g., consent, timeout, frequent monitoring)	
	2. Pertinent potential complications and management	
	3. Scope of practice related to procedures (e.g., moderate/procedural sedation)	
	4. Supplies, instruments, and equipment	
Nutrition	1. Individualized nutritional needs (e.g., malnutrition, disease processes, complications, cultural)	
	2. Nutrition administration modalities (e.g., enteral, parenteral)	
	3. Resources for alternate nutrition administration (e.g., speech consultation, dietary consultation)	
	4. Indications for alternate nutrition administration	



Domain	Percentage Weight	Number of Items on Test
Holistic Patient Care	15%	19 Items
Patient-Centered Care	1. Patient-centered care (e.g., active listening, communication preferences, family involvement, health goals.	
	2. Resources for patient-centered care	
	3. Patient advocacy	
	4. Patient satisfaction management (e.g., grievances, concerns regarding practices, second opinion, service recovery)	
Diversity and Inclusion	1. Cultural and linguistic needs (e.g., sign, oral, and written languages)	
	2. Cultural and linguistic resources (e.g., translated materials, interpreter services)	
	3. Implicit bias	
Education of Patients and Families	1. Health maintenance and disease prevention	
	2. Health literacy	
	3. Teaching methods	
Health Promotion	1. Health promotion goals	
	2. Resources available for patient/family	
	3. Health information to meet patient needs	
Palliative/End-of-Life Care	1. Palliative or end-of-life patient/caregiver resources (e.g., hospice, spiritual, cultural, physical)	
	2. End-of-life preferences (e.g., advance directives, code status)	
	3. Post-mortem care	
	4. Organ donation process	
	5. Regulatory requirements for reporting death (e.g., coroner's case)	



Domain	Percentage Weight	Number of Items on Test
Elements of Interprofessional Care	17%	21 Items
Nursing Process/Clinical Judgement Measurement Model	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nursing process - assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, evaluation 2. Strategies to individualize care 	
Interprofessional Collaboration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role within the interdisciplinary team (e.g., teamwork, communication skills) 2. Interprofessional rounding 3. Care coordination 4. Collaborative problem solving 	
Care Coordination and Transition Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community resources 2. Interdisciplinary collaboration integration methods (e.g., discharge planning, mobility, physical therapy) 3. Health history assessment from multiple sources 4. Discharge procedures (e.g., medication reconciliation) 5. Patient/family centered care 6. Care coordination and transition 7. Interprofessional roles and responsibilities 8. Continuum of care 9. Patients at risk for readmissions 10. Social determinants of health 11. Quality patient outcome measures 	
Documentation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Documentation of patient care 2. Electronic health records 3. Downtime procedures 4. Coaching for documentation performance improvement 	
Technology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technology, equipment use, and troubleshooting 2. Technology trends in health care 3. Nursing informatics 	



Domain	Percentage Weight	Number of Items on Test
Professional Concepts	15%	19 Items
Communication	1. Chain of command	
	2. Communication skills (e.g., active listening, verbal, non-verbal, written, conflict resolution, mediation)	
	3. Information sharing (e.g., Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation [SBAR], hand-off, closed-loop, check-back, read-back, huddle, verbal orders, bedside report, interdisciplinary)	
	4. Communication barriers (e.g., need for interpreter/translator, physical and cognitive limitations)	
	5. De-escalation techniques (e.g., verbal intervention, calm communication)	
Critical Thinking	1. Time management and prioritization of care	
	2. Crisis situations and resources (e.g., rapid response team, deteriorating patients, early warning systems)	
	3. Crisis management	
	4. Critical thinking (e.g., self-regulation, problem solving, analysis, interpretation, inference)	
Healthy Practice Environment	1. Workplace safety (e.g., physical, emotional, environmental)	
	2. Nurse resiliency and well-being	
	3. Unintended consequences (e.g., moral distress, moral injury, compassion fatigue, burnout)	
	4. Resource allocation (e.g., staffing, equipment)	
	5. Peer accountability	
Scope of Practice and Ethics	1. Scope of practice and code of ethics for nurses per local and regional nursing bodies (e.g., Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements, Standard V of the AMSN Scope and Standards, local governing Scope of Practice)	
	2. Patients' rights and responsibilities	
	3. Professional reporting and resources (e.g., ethics, scope of practice, unsafe practice)	
	4. Policies, procedures, regulatory and licensure requirements, standards of practice, and applicable state, federal, and local laws	
Quality Management	1. Evidence-based guidelines for nursing sensitive indicators	
	2. Quality standards and policies	
	3. Continuous quality and process improvement	
	4. Nursing professional practice model	
	5. Adverse event reporting	
	6. Patient customer experience based on data results (e.g., surveys, value-based purchasing)	
	7. Service recovery	
	8. Project development	
Evidence-Based Practice and Research	1. Legislative and licensure requirements	
	2. Evidence-based practice principles	
	3. Research process	



Domain	Percentage Weight	Number of Items on Test
Nursing Teamwork and Collaboration	21%	26 Items
Delegation and Supervision	1. Delegation and/or supervision practices	
	2. Scope of practice (e.g., licensed and unlicensed team members)	
	3. Prioritization skills (e.g., disease process)	
	4. Budgetary considerations (e.g., supplies, staffing, fiscal efficiency)	
Career Development Relationships	1. Professional engagement	
	2. Mentoring and coaching resources	
	3. Reflective practice	
	4. Roles and responsibilities	
	5. Coaching and learning theories	
	6. Professional empowerment	
	7. Orientation planning and preceptor best practices	
	8. Career development resources (e.g., education, training)	
Professional Development	1. Professional nursing practice and individual competencies	
	2. Professional behaviors (e.g., network, participate in professional organization)	
	3. Clinical judgement	
	4. Peer review methods	
	5. Educational needs assessment	
Leadership	1. Regulatory and compliance standards	
	2. Organizational structure	
	3. Shared decision-making	
	4. Nursing philosophy	
	5. Leadership models	
	6. Nursing care delivery systems	
	7. Change management (e.g., Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement [ADKAR])	
	8. Recruitment and retention	
	9. Employee engagement	
	10. Staff advocacy	
	11. Conflict management	
	12. Financial stewardship	
Disaster Planning and Management	1. Emergency procedures	
	2. Hospital incident command structure	



Appendix B: Exam Development Process

The Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board (MSNCB) participates in and provides oversight for the development and ongoing maintenance of the Certified Medical-Surgical Registered Nurse (CMSRN) exam. We work in partnership with our test development partner, Prometric, to ensure the exam is developed and maintained in a manner consistent with generally accepted psychometric, education testing, and national accreditation standards for certification programs.

Eight Steps to Exam Development

1. Create the Test Development Committee

The Test Development Committee is responsible for the development of the certification exams. Additional panels of subject matter experts may be appointed to conduct exam development activities. Nurses holding a CMSRN certification may apply to be on the Test Development Committee.

2. Conduct a Job Task Analysis

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

MSNCB has determined that a Job Analysis will be conducted no less than every five (5) years. This determination is based on the frequency of substantive changes in the field and compliance with standards for professional certification programs.

3. Determine Exam Specifications

The content for the exam is determined based on the recommended content outline and content area weights developed following each Job Analysis. The final content outline and corresponding content weights are approved by the MSNCB Board of Directors.

4. Write and Review Items

The questions and answers on the exam are referred to as “items.” Item writing and reviewing are usually conducted annually. Item writers and reviewers are required to complete item development training delivered by our test development partner prior to writing and reviewing exam items.

The development of all items is directly linked to the approved content outline.

Once items have been written by trained subject matter experts, they are 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 items on a test form.

5. Maintain an Item Bank

An item bank includes all items developed for the exam. The test development partner oversees the maintenance and security of the item bank. Each item in the item bank is reviewed at least every three (3) years for quality control.

6. Assemble and Approve Exam Form

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



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

Draft exam forms are assembled by the psychometric consultant to meet the exam specifications and are reviewed and approved by the Test Development Committee. The draft forms meet the requirements of the test specifications with respect to content and weighting and are reviewed for bias and sensitivity. Each exam form includes unscored questions to be pre-tested.

7. Establish the Passing Point

The passing point for the exam is established using a criterion-reference technique. Qualified and trained subject matter experts working with the psychometric consultant determine the passing point.

The process used to determine the passing point is documented as part of a cut score study report. The final passing point resulting from this process is approved by the MSNCB Board of Directors. Any modifications to the recommended passing point are 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 exam forms are equivalent are selected and documented by the psychometric consultant based on compliance with national accreditation standards.

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

8. Analyze the Exam Results

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

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

At a minimum, the technical reports 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 analyzes performance across all exam administration modalities to ensure comparability and identify potential irregularities.



Appendix C: Exam References

These references were used in the development of the CMSRN examination.

Books

Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses. (2018). *Scope and Standards of Medical-Surgical Nursing Practice* (6th ed.). Pitman, NJ.

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Murray, E. (2021). *Nursing Leadership and Management for Patient Safety and Quality Care* (2nd ed.). F. A. Davis Company.

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Hinkle, J.L. & Cheever, K.H. (2018). *Brunner & Suddarth's Textbook of Medical-Surgical Nursing* (14th ed.). Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer.

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Lewis, S.L., Dirksen, S.R., Heitkemper, M.M., Bucher, L., & Harding, M.M. (2017). *Medical-Surgical Nursing: Assessment and Management of Clinical Problems* (10th ed.). St. Louis: Elsevier.

Potter, P.A., Perry, A.G., Stockert, P.A., & Hall, A.M. (2019). *Essentials for Nursing Practice* (9th ed.). St. Louis: Elsevier.

Potter, P.A., Perry, A.G., Stockert, P.A., & Hall, A.M. (2017). *Fundamentals of Nursing* (9th ed.). St. Louis: Elsevier/Mosby.

Wilkinson, J.M., Treas, L.S., Barnett, K.L., & Smith, M.H. (2016). *Fundamentals of Nursing: Volume 1- Theory, Concepts, and Applications; Volume 2- Thinking, Doing, and Caring*. (3rd ed.). Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Co.

Pathophysiology Textbooks for Nurses, such as:

Grossman, S.C. & Porth, C.M. (2014). *Porth's Pathophysiology: Concepts of Altered Health States* (9th ed.). Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer.



McCance, K.L. & Huether, S.E. (2017). *Understanding Pathophysiology: The Biologic Basis for Disease in Adults and Children* (6th ed.). St. Louis: Elsevier/Mosby.

Pharmacology Books, such as:

Kee, J.L., Hayes, E.R., & McCuiston, L.E. (2014). *Pharmacology: A Patient-Centered Nursing Process Approach*. (8th ed.). St. Louis: Elsevier/W.B. Saunders.

Skidmore-Roth, L. (2018). *Mosby's 2018 Nursing Drug Reference, 31th ed.* St. Louis: Elsevier/Mosby.

Shields, K.M., Fox, K.L., & Liebrecht, C. (2018). *Pearson Nurse's Drug Guide 2018*. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing Books, such as:

Boyd, M.A. (2018). *Psychiatric Nursing: Contemporary Practice*. (6th ed.). Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer.

Giger, J.N. (2017). *Transcultural Nursing: Assessment & Intervention*. (7th ed.). Missouri: Elsevier.

Townsend, M.C. (2015). *Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing: Concepts of Care in Evidence-Based Practice*. (8th ed.). Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Co.

Townsend, M.C. & Morgan, K.I. (2017). *Essentials of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing: Concepts of Care in Evidence-Based Practice*. (7th ed.). Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Co.

Nutrition Books, such as:

Lutz, C.A., Mazur, E.E., and Litch, N.A. (2015). *Nutrition and Diet Therapy*. (6th ed.). Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Co.

Professional Journals, such as:

American Journal of Nursing, MEDSURG Nursing Journal, Nursing Clinics of North America, Nursing 201X.



Appendix D: Contact Hours

About Contact Hours

Contact hours are credits earned by engaging in activities related to medical-surgical nursing and professional development. The following is a list of eligible activities which may be used to earn contact hours. You do not need to earn contact hours in every activity. There are a maximum number of contact hours you may earn for each activity.

- 🔗 Continuing Education
- 🔗 Preceptorship/Mentorship
- 🔗 Academic Courses
- 🔗 Presentations
- 🔗 Publications
- 🔗 Conference Poster
- 🔗 Multimedia Program
- 🔗 Research
- 🔗 Board Member or Committee Chair of National Nursing Organization
- 🔗 MSNCB Test Development and Task Forces
- 🔗 MSNCB Recertification Committee
- 🔗 AMSN Volunteer Units

Enter contact hours directly into your application

You submit your contact hours directly into your application if you are recertifying by contact hours or transferring your MEDSURG-BC certification. [We recommend that you enter contact hours throughout your certification period.](#)

Designate contact hours as MedSurg or ProfDev

Every activity you submit in your application must be designated as either Medical-Surgical or Professional Development.

MedSurg contact hours must be related to the specialty of medical-surgical nursing and direct patient care. MedSurg contact hours are also called **specialty** contact hours. MedSurg excludes psychiatry, obstetrics, gynecology, and pediatrics.

ProfDev contact hours are related to the broader area of health care and general nursing. ProfDev includes nursing informatics and theory, ethics, leadership, and more.

Earn 90 contact hours

For those recertification methods in which you must earn ninety (90) contact hours, at least sixty-eight (68) of those contact hours must be MedSurg contact hours. The remaining twenty-two (22) contact hours may be ProfDev contact hours.



Earn contact hours during your accrual period

- ⌘ **Accrual period:** the time period during which any contact hours you earn count towards your recertification
- ⌘ **Certification period:** the time period during which your credential is valid
- ⌘ **Grace period:** the year after your certification expiration date

Your accrual period will change if you submit your recertification application during your grace period.
See the below chart to determine your accrual period.

Most recent certification was my...	Submitting current recertification during...	Submitted last recertification during...	Accrual began...	Accrual ends...
Initial Certification	Certification period	Not applicable	January 1 of the year in which I passed the exam	Last day of certification
	Grace period	Not applicable	5 years before recertification application date	Recertification application date
Subsequent Certifications	Certification period	Certification period	First day of certification	Last day of certification
		Grace period	Approval date of last recertification	Last day of certification
	Grace period	Certification period	5 years before recertification application date	Recertification application date
		Grace period	Approval date of last recertification	Recertification application date



Contact Hour Categories

Each category section below includes instructions on how to convert the activity into contact hours and the maximum number of contact hours you may earn for each activity (**Convert**), whether the activity can be designated MedSurg or ProfDev (**Designation**), what you will need to enter the activity in your application (**Submit**), and any other pertinent information or frequently asked questions.

You may also view the **Convert** and **Designation** information in a chart in [Appendix E](#).

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.
- If you earn contact hours through bundled courses, you must list each course separately in your application and appropriately designate each course as MedSurg or ProfDev with corresponding credit hours.
- Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits are acceptable when the content is applicable to medical-surgical nursing. When submitted, include the course outline and/or objectives. 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 Contact Hours. For any self-reported continuing education, you must submit the certificate that includes your name, the date earned, title of the program, the number of NCPDs awarded, and an accreditation statement.



Category 2: Preceptorship/Mentorship

Preceptors and mentors must provide one-on-one clinical supervision to a baccalaureate, masters, or doctoral degree student and/or newly hired nurse.

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. The official form can be found at the end of this handbook. Please refer to form for required information. Please first enter your precepting hours into your application as Self-Reported Contact Hours, and upload a precepting form.

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.
- If you were the instructor/lecturer for an academic course, please use Category 4: Presentations to record your contact hours.

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 provided to MSNCB. Please first enter your academic contact hours into your application as Self-Reported Contact Hours and upload an unofficial transcript.

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 Contact Hours. Please also include a syllabus or one-page overview of the presentation which includes how many contact hours were earned by participants of the program, course, or 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 Contact Hours. Please include 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 recertification application as Self-Reported Contact Hours. 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 recertification application as Self-Reported Contact Hours with any of the following: Media type, objectives, script or program outline, bibliography.

Category 8: Research

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 provided to MSNCB. Please first enter your research project into your recertification application as Self-Reported Contact Hours with the research proposal. 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 recertification application as Self-Reported Contact Hours. Include a letter from national nursing organization confirming appointment.

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.



Appendix E: Contact Hours Conversion Chart

	Category	Activity	Contact Hours	Maximum	Designation
1.	Continuing Education Hours	One NCPD	1	90	MS/PD
2.	Preceptor/Mentor	6 hours	1	20	MS
		120 hours	20		
3.	Academic Credits	One hour or credit	15	75	MS/PD
		5 hours or credits	75		
4.	Presentation	One hour	3	45	MS/PD
		15 hours	45		
5.	Professional Publications	Book	25	25	MS/PD
		Chapter	10		
		Article	5		
6.	Conference Poster	Poster	5	20	MS/PD
7.	Multimedia Development	One-hour program	5	20	MS/PD
8.	Research and EBP Projects	Research	30	30	MS/PD
		Evidence-Based Practice	15		
9.	Board/Committee Member	One hour	1	5	PD
		5 hours	5		
10.	MSNCB Test Development	Two days	5	20	MS/PD
11.	MSNCB Recertification Committee	One year	2	20	PD
12.	AMSN Volunteer Unit	One year	5	20	MS/PD



Appendix F: Denial, Suspension, or Revocation Policies

The following sections summarize Policies 209, 210, and 211. See CMSRN Certification Policies for a more in-depth review.

Ethics Committee responds to misconduct

The Ethics Committee maintains and enforces standards of professional conduct and ethics within MSNCB and for CMSRN certificants. Any violation of certification policies should be reported to MSNCB in writing and should include a detailed description of factual allegations supporting the charges and any relevant supporting documentation.

Revocation, denial, or suspension of credential

We consider misrepresentation or noncompliance with certification policies or misuse of the CMSRN credential serious issues that require investigation and possible disciplinary or legal action. If certification is denied, suspended, or revoked for any reason, no fee will be refunded.

MSNCB may revoke, deny, or suspend certification for causes including but not limited to:

- ⌘ Falsifying information on the exam or recertification application
- ⌘ Falsifying any supporting documentation requested by MSNCB
- ⌘ Suspected pre-knowledge of test content
- ⌘ Impersonating another person to take the exam
- ⌘ Cheating on the exam or any other evidence of compromising the exam
- ⌘ Sharing exam knowledge with others
- ⌘ Misrepresentation or fraudulent use of the CMSRN credential
- ⌘ Using the CMSRN credential after your credential has expired

Appeal MSNCB decisions

If you are denied certification or your credential is revoked or suspended, you may appeal the decision in certain circumstances. All eligible appeals must be filed within thirty (30) days of notification of denial, revocation, or suspension or the right to appeal is forfeit.

The appeal is reviewed and decided by a sub-committee of the MSNCB Board of Directors who were not involved with the previous recommended decision by the Ethics Committee.

Eligible for appeals

- ⌘ Denial of eligibility for the certification exam.
- ⌘ Denial of eligibility for recertification by contact hours.
 - Denial of credit for contact hours.
 - Insufficient contact hours due to catastrophic natural or personal events.
- ⌘ Revocation of certification.

Ineligible for appeals

- ⌘ Failure to complete the certification exam in the time allotted.
- ⌘ The validity of a specific test item.
- ⌘ Failure to meet deadline dates for supporting documentation, audit requests, or any other requests by MSNCB.



- ⌘ Action against the individual's credential due to disciplinary action of the RN license by a licensing authority.
- ⌘ Failure to receive recertification notice. It is your responsibility to apply for recertification and notify MSNCB of any change in name, address, or contact information.



Appendix G: Certification Comparison to MEDSURG-BC

There are two certifications offered in the specialty of medical-surgical nursing: the CMSRN from MSNCB and the MEDSURG-BC from ANCC.

MSNCB provides this table of comparisons between the two certification programs to help you determine which one is right for you. Differences are shaded in gray.

Certification Comparison

	CMSRN	MEDSURG-BC
Credential	CMSRN	MEDSURG-BC
Certifying Body	MSNCB	ANCC
Endorsement from AMSN	Yes	No
Accreditation by ABSNC	Yes	Yes
Magnet Recognition Status	Yes	Yes
Certification Duration	5 years	5 years

Certification Eligibility Criteria

	CMSRN	MEDSURG-BC
RN License	Yes	Yes
Years of Practice	2 years	2 years
Type of Practice	Clinical/Management/Education	Clinical
Practice Hours in Past 3 years	2,000 hours	2,000 hours
Contact Hours in Past 3 years	None	30 contact hours

Certification Exam

	CMSRN	MEDSURG-BC
Number of Questions	150	150
Test Centers	Yes	Yes
Live Remote Proctor	Yes	Yes
Based on practice analysis	Yes	Yes
Test Site at Your Facility	No	No



Certification Pricing and Discounts

	CMSRN	MEDSURG-BC
Exam Standard Fee	\$394	\$395
Exam Member Fee	\$267 AMSN Member	\$295 ANA Member
Facility Registration Program	FailSafe Certification Program	Success Pays

Examination Prep Resources

	CMSRN	MEDSURG-BC
Sample Questions	Yes	Yes
Online Prep Test	Prep Test from Test Run	No
Publications/Online	Yes, through AMSN	Yes
Certification Review Course	Yes, through AMSN	Yes

Recertification Options

	CMSRN	MEDSURG-BC
By Contact Hours	Yes	Yes
By Exam	Yes	Partially
By Transfer	Yes	No

Recertify by Contact Hours Eligibility Criteria

	CMSRN	MEDSURG-BC
Current Med-Surg Certification	Yes	Yes
RN License	Yes	Yes
Type of Practice	Clinical/Management/Education	None
Practice Hours in Past 5 years	1,000	None
Contact Hours in Past 5 years	90 contact hours	75 contact hours + 1 category

Recertify by Contact Hours Pricing and Discounts

	CMSRN	MEDSURG-BC
Recertify Standard Fee	\$303	\$350
Recertify Member Fee	\$193 AMSN Member	\$250 ANA Member



