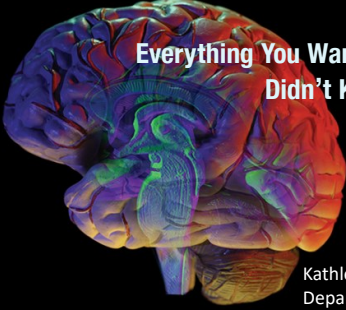


# Preparing for the ABPP Board Certification Examination in Clinical Neuropsychology

## Everything You Wanted to Know but Didn't Know Who to Ask



Kathleen Fuchs, Ph.D., ABPP  
Department of Neurology  
University of Virginia

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# Overview

1. Purpose and Benefits of Board Certification
2. (Brief) History and Organizational Structure of ABPP, ABCN and AACN
3. Overview of Examination Phases
  - Credential Review
  - Written Examination
  - Practice Sample
  - Oral Examination
4. The competencies that will be assessed

\*Maintenance of Certification  
\*Pediatric Subspecialization



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# Acknowledgement




## Dr. Linas Bieliauskas

Part of the original ABCN Board  
Previous Executive Director of ABCN  
Created this workshop



## Dr. Anthony Stringer

Previous presenter of this workshop  
and creator of this slide set



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My Objectives

- Clarify misperceptions and provide current information
- Tips for Success
- Unconditional Positive Regard



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My Qualifications

- I am board certified (since 2005)
- Previous Practice Sample reviewer
- Was elected to the Board of Directors and served a credential reviewer and then Chair of the Credential Review Committee
- Have served on Written Examination review and item writing committees
- Wrote an ethics vignette that was used in an oral exam
- Have been an Examiner for all parts of the Oral Exam
- Served a term as President of ABCN
- Currently on the ABPP Board of Trustees
- Have former postdocs successfully earn board certification



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Financial Disclosure

None, zero, nada....don't I wish.



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### Purpose and Benefits of Board Certification



The American Board of  
Clinical Neuropsychology



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### Purpose of the Examination

1) Assess [entry level] competence in the practice of clinical neuropsychology


2) Measure of fund of knowledge

3) Determine effectiveness in applying knowledge in the clinical setting

4) Promote the welfare of the patient

5) Provide a standard by which competence is judged.

*Bieliauskas & Matthews, 1987*



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### Before Board Certification in Neuropsychology





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Less protection for public

No consistent standard for evaluating training and competence

Multiple paths to professional competence

Competence essentially a matter of self-declaration

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Certification by peer examination is the standard method of assuring professional competence.

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Top 10 Reasons to Pursue Board Certification

(Armstrong, Beebe, Hilsabeck, & Kirkwood , 2014; Sweet, Nelson, & Moberg, 2006).

1Higher Income

2Greater Job Satisfaction

3Becoming a Job Requirement

4Professional/Inst Credibility

5License/Practice Mobility

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Top 10 Reasons to Pursue Board Certification

(Continued)

6Ease of Credentialing

7Sets Clear Public Standard

8Promotes Training Quality

9Increases Personal Knowledge

10Personal Validation/Modeling

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Question #1

How will board certification help my career?

and by “career,” I mean, “me”



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Higher Income

~ Pay differential in the armed services

~ Step pay differential in the VA

~ Required by some institutions for promotion



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Becoming a Job Requirement

• APA Accreditation Handbook:

Psychologists administratively responsible for the training program....should be professional role models for faculty, staff, and students, as demonstrated ... by recognition or distinction within professional associations... or possession of ABPP certification in the appropriate specialty field....It is desirable that other professional psychology staff members be comparably qualified.



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Becoming a Job Requirement

- **APPCN Guidelines for Postdoctoral Training in Clinical Neuropsychology:**  
*A postdoctoral training program in clinical neuropsychology should be directed by a board-certified clinical neuropsychologist.*
- **The National Conference on Postdoctoral Training in Professional Psychology:**  
*[The] director has expertise in an area of postdoctoral training offered, and has credentials of excellence such as the American Board of Professional Psychology diploma...*



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Ok, sure.....  
but I'm not affiliated with a training program

- Many medical centers expect all health care providers to be board certified in their professional specialty
- May be a requirement for promotion
- Can distinguish yourself in the private practice marketplace



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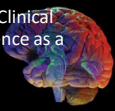
Professional/Institutional Credibility

**The Houston Conference:**

Specifies that education for specialty practice should continue through residency training, exit criteria for which include: " Eligibility for board certification in clinical neuropsychology...."

**APPCN:**

"Attainment of **ABCN/ABPP** specialist certification in Clinical Neuropsychology is the clearest evidence of competence as a Clinical Neuropsychologist..."



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Sets Clear Public Standard

Neuropsychology

- Generic psychology licensure is not the endpoint
- Specialization occurs post-Ph.D./Psy.D. degree
- Board certification is a voluntary addition designating higher level of training
- Specialty training is nationally standardized and regulated by the profession

Medicine

- Generic medical licensure is not the endpoint
- Specialization occurs post-MD /DO degree
- Board certification is a voluntary addition designating higher level of training
- Specialty training is nationally standardized and regulated by the profession

To be treated as equals, we must set a comparable public standard



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Sets Clear Public Standard

Legitimacy in Psychology Specialty Certification

- Problem with unknown number of “vanity” boards
- Addressed through a formal oversight board: American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) established in 1947
- Only 17 specialty boards are recognized by ABPP as meeting its standard for professional certification in psychology specialties
- ABCN is the specialty board for neuropsychology

Legitimacy in Medical Specialty Certification

- Over 100 medical specialty boards
- Addressed through a formal oversight board: American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS)
- Only 22 specialty boards are recognized by ABMS as meeting its standard for professional certification in medical specialties

To be treated as equals, we must set a comparable public standard



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License/Practice Mobility

~ Reciprocity of license in most states

~ Must achieve state passing score on EPFP or qualify for waiver by having ABPP



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Question #2

How many neuropsychologists are board certified?



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As of June 2025, there are 1807 board certified clinical neuropsychologists

NAN Membership  
3300


1807

Equivalent to 46% of NAN Membership

SCN/Div 40 Membership  
4000

1807

Equivalent to 38% of SCN Membership (but not all SCN members are clinical neuropsychologists)



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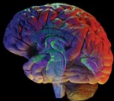
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Broad Geographic Distribution

- Board Certified Neuropsychologists are in all 50 States and the District of Columbia
- Board Certified Neuropsychologists are in 6 Canadian Provinces

Want to find a board certified neuropsychologist near you?  
Check out <https://abpp.org/directory/>



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Question #3

Isn't board certification is only for academics?



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Origins of this belief....

- May originate from APA/APPCN requirements that fellowship Training Directors be board certified.
- Training program faculty also are encouraged to obtain board certification.
- Academics may have institutional support for obtaining board certification.

However...



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In reality...

- Certification is actually in **CLINICAL** Neuropsychology
- Examination assesses knowledge as it pertains to **clinical practice**
- Only **true clinical activities** done as part of research count towards fellowship requirement
- Majority of board certified neuropsychologists are in clinical settings having no academic affiliation (Bieliauskas)
- Board certification does not incur any particular advantage to those in tenure-track, full-time, academic career paths



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Question #4

Isn't board certification an elitist, "old boys" network?



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In reality...

- The problem goes beyond just board certification
- Neuropsychology as a profession has a diversity problem



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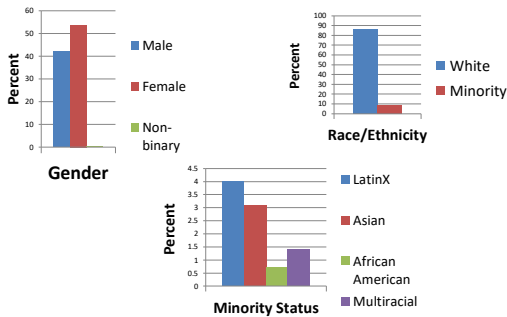
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Results from survey completed by 944 Board Certified Neuropsychologists in 2022 during Annual Renewal



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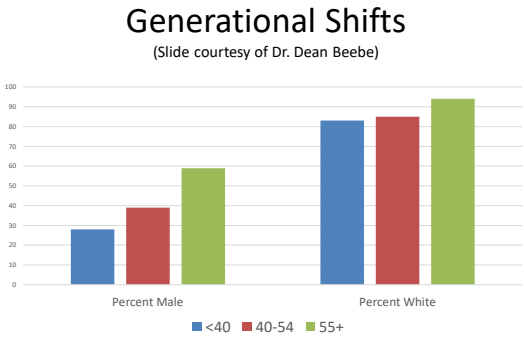
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Under 40 predominantly female and slightly more diverse

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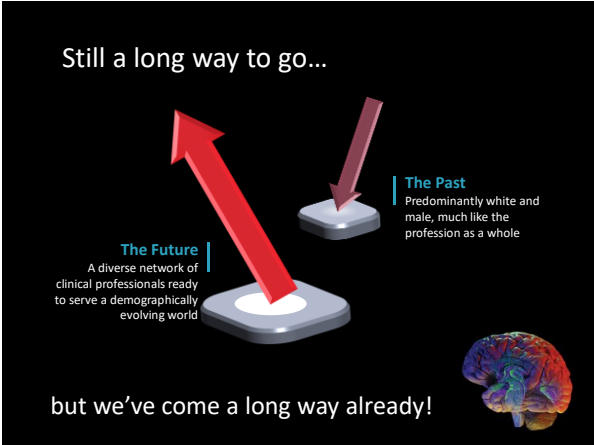
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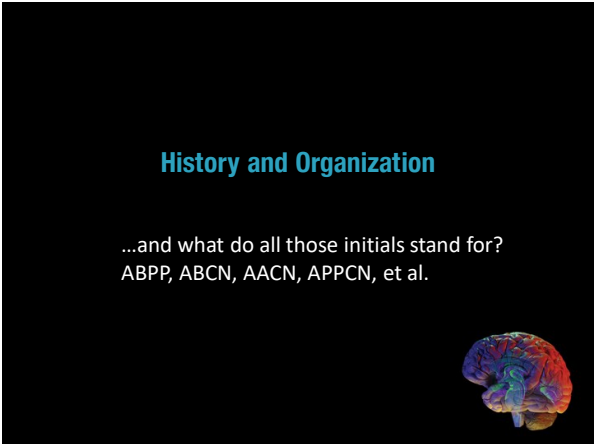
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American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP)

- APA established ABPP in 1947
- Recognized the need to separate advocacy for the profession of psychology from professional credentialing
- Since 1947, ABPP has grown to include 17 member boards in recognized areas of specialty practice.
- ABCN is the member board for the specialty of neuropsychology
- ABPP does not establish multiple boards for the same specialty



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What does ABPP do?

- Protects the public through psychology specialty certification and maintenance of certification (MOC)
- Conducts initial and periodic reviews required of specialty boards to establish and maintain their affiliation with ABPP
- Sets minimum criteria for specialty certification that are shared by all 17 boards
- Manages the application process and oversees credentialing for all boards
- Provides education and consulting on professional ethics
- Recognizes early career achievements and service to the profession through various awards \*

\*Neuropsychologists have been very successful



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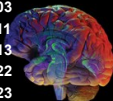
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ABPP Member Boards

American Board of:	Approved:
• Clinical Psychology	1947
• Counseling Psychology	1947
• Organizational & Business Consulting	1947
• School Psychology	1968
• Clinical Neuropsychology	1983
• Forensic Psychology	1984
• Couple and Family Psychology	1990
• Clinical Health Psychology	1991
• Behavioral & Cognitive Psychology	1992
• Rehabilitation Psychology	1995
• Psychoanalysis	1996
• Group Psychology	1999
• Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology	2003
• Police and Public Safety Psychology	2011
• Geropsychology	2013
• Addiction Psychology	2022
• Serious Mental Illness	2023



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ABCN Position Within ABPP

- Not the largest board
  - Clinical Psychology is the largest
- But, the fastest growing board within ABPP
- One of only two boards with a written exam
- The only board with a subspecialty (Pediatrics)
- Known within ABPP both as a standard-setter and innovator
- Recently completed our periodic comprehensive review and received high praise



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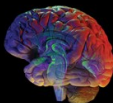
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Apply to ABPP directly

- ABPP confirms your training as a PSYCHOLOGIST
- Confirm you graduated from an accredited program and completed an accredited internship
- Once credentials confirmed the application is passed onto the specialty board



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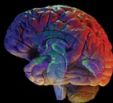
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Now, what does ABCN do?

- Examines applicants for board certification in clinical neuropsychology
- Awards certificates in clinical neuropsychology (and pediatric subspecialty) and maintains a registry of awardees
- Evaluates compliance with MOC requirements
- Can revoke certificates with cause (misrepresentation, criminal conviction, ethical violation)



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How is ABCN organized?

- All-volunteer, elected (by active certificate holders) Board of Directors, each serving a 5-year term (2-term maximum), comprised of:
  - 15 ABCN-Certified Clinical Neuropsychologists
  - Specialists reflecting interests of both adult and pediatric neuropsychology
  - At least 1 early-career (within 10 years of doctorate) neuropsychologist
  - At least 1 neuropsychologist with a certificate in the pediatric subspecialty
- Volunteer committees and cadres, and an Executive Director carry out day-to-day activities



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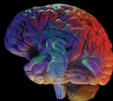
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ABCN Volunteer Committees and Cadres

- Executive Committee (Officers of the Board)
- Credentials Review Committee
- Examination Committee
  - Specialty and Subspecialty Written Exam Development Subcommittees
  - Specialty and Subspecialty Practice Samples Review Subcommittees
  - Oral Exam Fact-Finding Development Subcommittee
  - Oral Exam Ethics Development Subcommittee
- Nominations Committee (nominates candidates for Board election)
- Pediatric Subspecialty Committee
- Diversity Committee
- ADA Committee
- MOC Committee
- Practice Sample Review and Oral Examiner Cadres
- Appeals Committee

That's a lot of work for 15 board members and an exec committee



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ABCN is not a membership organization

- Why Not?
- Potential conflict of interest between the conduct of professional examinations to protect the public and advocacy on behalf of the profession
- ABPP requires each specialty board to develop an independent academy to conduct advocacy and membership activities – for us that's AACN
- ABCN does not collect dues; annual fees are to ABPP for maintenance of certification (requires attestation)



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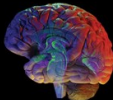
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American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology

- AACN - incorporated in 1996 as our membership organization as required by ABPP
- Advocates for and supports maintenance of professional standards through ABCN certification
- Provides continuing education for members and non-members to prepare professionals for board certification and to maintain proficiency



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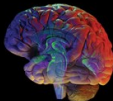
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Additional AACN Activities

- Two Official Journals: *The Clinical Neuropsychologist (TCN)* and *Child Neuropsychology*
- Establishes Task Forces on Professional Issues
- Develops Position Papers on Professional Issues
- Mentoring Program for Certification Candidates
- Maintains Member and Community Listservs
- Maintains a Directory of Board Certified Neuropsychologists
- In collaboration with NAN and SCN/Div 40, conducts the periodic “salary survey” [Sweet, Klipfel, Nelson & Moberg; 2021, *The Clinical Neuropsychologist*, 35 (1), 7-80]
- Develops outreach programs



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ABCN and AACN Milestones

Year	Milestone
1981	- Div 40/INS Task Force identifies need for board certification - ABCN incorporated in Minnesota in response to this need
1983	- First ABCN Examinations - ABCN affiliates with ABPP
1984	- First ABPP/ABCN certificates awarded
1993	- Written Examination instituted (paper format, administered at national conferences)
1996	- AACN established
1999	- First AACN Position Paper published
2002	- ABCN affirms Houston Conference (HC) guidelines - Written Exam updated to reflect HC guidelines
2003	- First Annual AACN Meeting - <i>The Clinical Neuropsychologist</i> becomes official journal of AACN
2004	- 500 <sup>th</sup> ABCN Certificate awarded (took 23 years to achieve)

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ABCN and AACN Milestones (continued)	
Year	Milestone
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AACN partners with Oxford University Press to produce book series</li><li>- Be Ready for ABPP in Neuropsychology (BRAIN) becomes AACN Committee</li></ul>
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- ABCN initiates "fast track" for applicants from APPCN or APA accredited Neuropsychology Fellowships</li><li>- AACN partners with Psychology Press to produce book series</li></ul>
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AACN Foundation established</li></ul>
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- ABCN endorses Maintenance of Certification</li></ul>
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Child Neuropsychology</i> becomes official journal of Pediatric Special Interest Group</li></ul>
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- First AACN Position Paper published</li><li>- ABCN begins accepting online Practice Sample submissions</li><li>- Written Exam transitions to computer administration at testing centers</li></ul>
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- ABPP approves ABCN's creation of first subspecialty (Pediatric)</li></ul>
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 1000<sup>th</sup> ABCN Certificate awarded (took only 10 years)</li></ul>
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 1500<sup>th</sup> ABCN Certificate awarded (took only 8 years)</li></ul>

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Question #5

Aren't there other neuropsychology boards that are "at war" with ABCN?

Yes – other boards.....No to war.



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ABN

- American Board of Professional Neuropsychology (ABN) founded in 1982, period of inactivity and reassessment of need 1986-1990, reestablished in 1991.
  - American College of Professional Neuropsychology (ACPN) has 2 official journals:
    - Applied Neuropsychology - Adult*
    - Applied Neuropsychology - Child*
- Also has a multistep process that includes a written exam, a practice sample, and an oral exam
- For more info: <https://www.abn-board.com/about-us>



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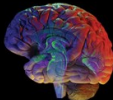
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ABPdN

- American Board of Pediatric Neuropsychology (ABPdN) founded in 1996
- AAPdN conducts an annual conference and has an official journal (*Journal of Pediatric Neuropsychology*)
- Has an associated student organization
- Also requires a written exam, work sample, and an oral exam
- For more info: [theabpdn.org/about](http://theabpdn.org/about)



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Why are there alternative boards?

- ABCN follows Houston Conference Guidelines for neuropsychology training
  - ABN may accept more variation in training
- ABCN provides subspecialty certification in pediatric neuropsychology, only after general certification in clinical neuropsychology
  - ABPdN approaches pediatric certification as a standalone credential
  - Began offering this credential before the ABCN pediatric subspecialty became available



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ABCN is not at war with any Board

- Peaceful co-existence
- ABN or ABPdN are in no respect an impediment to ABCN's continued growth and success
  - Neither are eligible to be a part of ABPP
  - Neither offer a credential recognized by licensing boards as sufficient for waiving of state licensure requirements
- No reason for ABCN to consider a merger or incorporation
- ABCN is in support of ABN's membership in the Clinical Neuropsychology Specialty Council (CNSC) and other inter-organizational agencies
- Similarly support ABPdN's participation in interorganizational activities



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Concern:

Board Certification in Neuropsychology is expensive.



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Fees are moving target but currently:

Total Cost (subject to change): **\$1515**


Application \$125/\$65/\$25

Written Exam \$300  
Testing Center \$210

Practice Sample \$250

Oral Exam \$550

Fees cover the cost of developing and administering the exam as we are a volunteer operation



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There are scholarships...

Through the ABPP Foundation

- Dr. Walter Katkovsky scholarship (WKS) – up to \$1500; awarded to up to 15 people/year
- Early career psychologist – up to \$765
- Scholarship for Training Directors – up to \$1000
- Early Career Psychology Diversity Award - \$1,000 (need to be nominated)

See <https://abpp.org>



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Scholarships through AACN and APPCN

See <https://theaacn.org/scholarships-for-abpp/>

AACN offers 30 scholarships which can include, but are not limited to, APPCN graduates. APPCN offers 9 scholarships which are designated for graduates of APPCN member programs only.

- Scholarships are available for any of the three stages of the ABPP application process: the written test, practice sample submission, and oral examination.
- Scholarships will be awarded as reimbursement of expenses for the stage applied for.
- Individuals may apply for a scholarship for more than one stage, but applications submitted for the January 1st deadline must be for expenses paid in the previous calendar year.
- Those who have funding available from their employer to support ABPP application costs are not eligible.
- AACN and APPCN strongly encourage applications from ALL individuals going through the boarding process.



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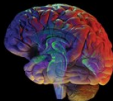
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Be strategic

- When negotiating an employment contract, ask for funds to cover board certification costs and travel
- If you are asked to take on training duties, negotiate for funds to cover board certification
- If your institution requires board certification for promotion, ask for educational funds to cover your costs

Remember, if you don't ask you likely won't get



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Overview of Exam and Outcome Data



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ABCN Board Certification Exam Has Two Phases

• Phase 1: Evaluate Training and Knowledge


– Step 1: Credential Review

– Step 2: Written Exam

• Phase 2: Evaluate Clinical Competence

– Step 1: Practice Sample Review

– Step 2: Oral Exam



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Phase 1 — Step 1: Credential Review


• Apply to ABPP (via website)

• ABPP reviews application to see if applicant meets the general criteria that apply across all boards:

– Doctoral degree is from a program in professional psychology

– Degree from an accredited program (at time degree granted)

– Must be licensed as a psychologist for independent practice at the doctoral level in a jurisdiction in the U.S., its territories, or Canada



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Exceptions to ABPP Criteria

• ABPP Central Office has authority to grant exceptions to general criteria

• Limited exceptions exist for:

– Persons earning doctoral degrees prior to 1983


– Degrees granted outside the U.S. or Canada

– Persons completing retraining programs

– Persons able to demonstrate their program had equivalent accreditation

– Licensure in jurisdiction of practice for some Federal employees

Exception criteria and procedures are available from the ABPP Central Office.



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ABPP Credential Review Decision

- If approved by ABPP Central Office, application is forwarded to the specialty board for review
- If not approved by ABPP Central Office:
  - Applicant is notified
  - Given recommendations for improving application
  - Must demonstrate application has been improved in order to reapply
- Reapplication requires a new application fee



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Question #6

I didn't discover neuropsychology until I was on internship or I didn't do a neuropsychology internship – can I still get board certified?



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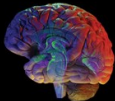
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Yes...

- Internship is a requirement for earning a doctoral degree in professional psychology graduate programs
- ABPP (and not ABCN) defines the requirements for internship
- Those requirements are generic and apply across boards
- ABCN does not have any requirement that the internship be in neuropsychology



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Question #7

How many years after fellowship do I need to wait in order to apply for board certification?



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You can apply now!!!

- The early entry option allows you to apply while still in training and costs only \$25
  - Apply during internship or fellowship
  - Apply before you are licensed
- ABPP holds application until you submit transcripts, proof of internship, proof of fellowship, licensure, etc.
- Once complete, the review begins and you will have saved \$100

Apply early!



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Something to consider

- You have 7 years to complete the process and the clock starts once your credentials are approved by ABCN
- It may be to your benefit to sit for the written exam early on and then take some time to gather further clinical practice before moving to the practice sample review and oral exam
- BUT, the further you are from your exam preparation, the more you may find yourself needing to re-review for the oral exam
- This timeline allows for a couple of stumbles along the way as well as “life happens”
- If you haven’t finished by then end of year 7, you have to start over but with an expedited credential review



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ABCN Specific Credential Review Criteria

- All applicants must document didactic experiences across 8 core knowledge areas
  - Basic neurosciences
  - Functional neuroanatomy
  - Neuropathology
  - Clinical neurology
  - Psychological assessment
  - Clinical neuropsychological assessment
  - Psychopathology
  - Psychological intervention



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ABCN Specific Credential Review Criteria

- These didactics may be obtained any time during training
  - Graduate coursework
  - Professional seminars
  - Brain dissection/pathology rounds
  - Other clinical specialty rounds
  - Case conferences
- Completion of an APA-accredited or APPCN Member Fellowship in Neuropsychology is sufficient documentation
- Otherwise, the applicant is expected to list the experiences that satisfy the didactic requirements
- Helpful to keep a spreadsheet to document along the way



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ABCN Specific Credential Review Criteria

Degree Earned or Respecialization Completed:

After 1/1/2005

- Training conforms to Houston Conference Guidelines
- Two year fellowship/residency in clinical neuropsychology (or half-time equivalent completed within 4 years)
- Postdoctoral program must include structured and sequenced clinical and didactic experiences; fellowship must put learning needs of fellow ahead of operational needs of program
- At least 50% of postdoctoral training must be in the provision of clinical neuropsychological services that are supervised by a clinical neuropsychologist (board certification not required, but CV may be requested).
- Neuropsychology services must be integrative (i.e., the interpretation and integration of results in a written report to patients, research participants or physicians), applied to a variety of patient populations, and performed throughout postdoctoral training.
- APA accreditation or APPCN membership is not required

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### ABCN Specific Credential Review Criteria

Experiential Requirement Based on Date Degree Earned  
or Respecialization Completed:

#### Prior to 1981

- 4800 hours of postdoctoral neuropsychology experience (2400 in direct clinical service)

#### 1981 to 1989

- 1600 hours of neuropsychology experience
- Supervised by clinical neuropsych at pre or postdoc level

#### 1990 to 2004

- Didactic and experiential training in neuropsych
- 2 year minimum
- At least 1 of the years is postdoc
- Training at an accredited university
- Onsite supervision for all clinical cases

Why are these rules different??

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### What if I “mostly” meet criteria?

- Only the Credential Review Committee can make decisions about whether you meet specialty criteria.
- Only the Credential Review Committee can grant exceptions, and they do so on a case-by-case basis.
- Direct questions about your situation to the Committee Chair: [credentialreview@theabcn.org](mailto:credentialreview@theabcn.org)

We want to help people be successful in the boarding process but don’t want folks to waste time and money if they don’t have the sufficient background and experience.

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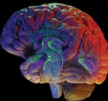
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#### Question #8

How many fellowship hours are required? Can I leave fellowship early as long as I meet the ABCN requirement for total hours?



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Focus on professional development

- ABCN doesn't have a requirement for total hours.
- From 2005 on, the requirement is for a 2-year fellowship (or half-time equivalent completed in 4 years).
- This cannot be stretched to quarter time completed in 8 years.
- It is no use arguing that because you worked 60 hours a week and full time is only 40 hours a week, that you can leave fellowship early and still meet the requirement.



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But if you do need to leave fellowship early...

Early Departure	Suggested Actions
1-6 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Letter from fellowship director attesting that applicant left the program in good standing, met progress criteria up to the point of departure, <i>and</i> type and duration of incomplete requirements (e.g., specific didactics, case supervision)</li><li>- Detailed documentation that all outstanding requirements were met following departure from the postdoctoral training program.</li></ul>
> 6 Months (occurs mostly in VA settings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- All of the above</li><li>- Resume training in a job setting where a formal postdoctoral fellowship in neuropsychology exists</li><li>- Letter from job supervisor attesting that all outstanding requirements were met in the context of their postdoctoral training program</li><li>- Caseload comparable to other fellows</li><li>- All cases supervised, face-to-face and onsite</li><li>- Met postdoc graduation criteria</li></ul>

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Question #10

ABCN requires that half of my clinical time in fellowship be in neuropsychological activities, so can I do a 1-year neuropsych fellowship and a second year doing a rehab or med psych fellowship?



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No...

- The requirement is for a 2-year clinical neuropsychology fellowship.
- Neuropsychology fellows may engage in other activities during the 2 years, including psychotherapy, cognitive rehabilitation, research, etc.
- But this still should be in the context of a fellowship that is training you in neuropsychology for the full 2 years.
- 50% of the fellowship across the 2 years should be spent in supervised clinical neuropsychological activities.

What's the take away message here?



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Question #11

Does a research fellowship in neuropsychology counts the same as a clinical fellowship?



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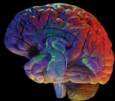
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No (-ish)

- Board certification is in clinical neuropsychology, not in research.
- Clinical activities done as part of research do count towards the fellowship requirement. But, they must include:
  - Interview
  - Neuropsychological testing
  - Production of a integrated report
  - Feedback to the subject
  - Onsite supervision by a neuropsychologist



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**Question #12**

Since I only have to spend 50% of my time in clinical neuropsychological activities, I could see patients full time in year 1, and do full time research, etc., in year 2.



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**See response to question #10**

- This will not provide the sequential training experience that is the spirit of a 2 year fellowship
- The intent is to prepare you for independent, competent clinical practice
- Remember that the goal is not to find a clever way to meet the credential requirements. The goal is to become good at clinical neuropsychology.



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**Question #13**

Since there is no neuropsychology fellowship in my geographic area, can I meet the requirement by getting supervision in my clinical practice?



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Be very careful here...

- Avoid cobbling together something that looks like a fellowship but isn't actually a formal training program.
- A clinical supervisor normally retains responsibility for cases seen by fellows and is onsite. This is not the case when you contract for supervision in your clinical practice.
- Just as you may have had to travel for graduate school and internship, the same may be necessary for fellowship.
- Greater flexibility exists for Canadian applicants, but since 2005 fellowships in neuropsychology in the U.S. have become more broadly available.



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Question #14

My program requires my supervisor be off site, will ABCN accept this?



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Maybe...

- Exceptions to the onsite requirement may be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Must serve a clear training purpose (e.g., experience providing services to rural, underserved communities).
- Unlikely to be accepted if all cases seen as part of fellowship are supervised remotely.



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Question #15

Will ABCN come down on my fellowship if they don't give me the training they advertised?



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No

- ABCN doesn't police fellowships
- Advantage of doing an APA accredited or APPCN member fellowship: gives you somewhere to complain if the fellowship isn't keeping its promises
- ABCN has no power over fellowships
- All we do is conduct the board certification exam



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Credential Review (CR) Anxiety

- Pass rate is high for credential review
- Self-selection boosts pass rate
- Nonetheless, CR is not the gate-keeper applicants believe
- ABCN errs on the side of passing at the CR phase
- If you have concerns, contact ABCN
- [credentialreview@theabcn.org](mailto:credentialreview@theabcn.org)



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### Tips for the Credential Review



1. Answer just the questions you're asked on the application.
2. Don't make up your own questions so you can add information that isn't required just because you think it makes you look good.
3. If your supervisors are not board certified, ask them to describe their background and credentials in neuropsychology in their letters of support.
4. Ask your supervisors to describe how your fellowship training meets Houston Conference Guidelines if it is not an APA or APPCN program.
5. Ask your supervisors to keep their letters short. This is not a job application reference, and we don't need to know what you did in your job.
6. Make sure application is complete.

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### ABCN Credential Review Decision

- If it is unclear whether the applicant meets criteria, the application will be put in hold status and the applicant asked to submit additional material (please respond promptly)
- If credential review is not passed:
  - Applicant is notified by ABPP Central Office
  - Given recommendations for improving application
  - Must demonstrate application has been improved in order to reapply
  - Reapplication requires a new application fee
- If credentials are approved, candidacy begins



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### ABCN Candidacy

- Candidacy begins as of the date of notification that CR was passed (date on letter of notification)
- Candidate has 7 years to complete remainder of the examination
- But it doesn't have to take 7 years!
  - Don't procrastinate!
  - Board certification can be completed quickly
  - Follow the steps and timeline



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Question #16

How long does the process take?



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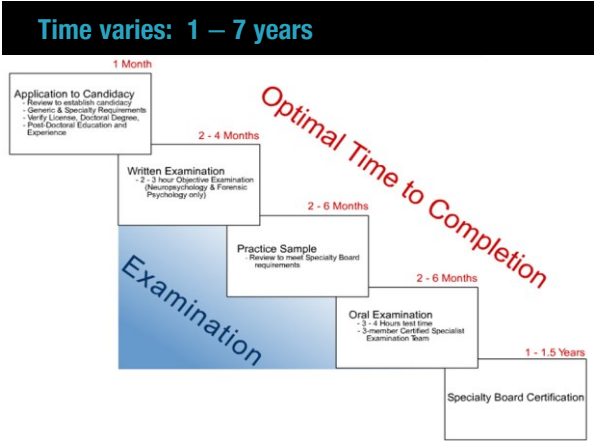
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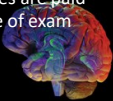
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Phase 1 – Step 2: Written Exam

- Administered 4 times a year (within a 2 week window) at Pearson/VUE testing centers
  - Network of 5000 testing centers in 180 countries and territories
  - Also available on 280 military bases
- 125 multiple choice questions covering core knowledge bases for clinical neuropsychology
- May take the written exam during any testing window after being notified of passing credential review
- Exam is scheduled through the ABCN office and fees are paid to ABPP Central Office. Takes 3-4 weeks after close of exam window to get your results



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**Phase 1 – Step 2: Written Exam**

- If you do not obtain a passing score on the exam:
  - Must wait approx. 6 months to retake it (the second exam window following the unsuccessful attempt)
  - May take the exam up to three times during your 7-year candidacy period
  - Must repay fees each time
  - After third failure, must restart the process with new credential review
  - With new application, all previous actions will be regarded as if having never happened
  - All candidates will be required to engage in the examination procedures that are current at the time of their re-application



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**Written Examination**

- Prepared in conjunction with Alpine Testing Solutions
- Updated every 2-3 years
  - Greater focus on content relevant to clinical practice
- 125 multiple-choice items (25 are pilot items)
- 2.5 hours to complete exam
  - Accommodations can be requested in advance with appropriate documentation of need (ABCN ADA committee reviews requests)



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**Modernization of the Written Exam**

- Completed a job task survey of 300 board certified neuropsychologists to identify the knowledge and skills most relevant to current clinical practice
- Some knowledge domains that we tested in the past are not called upon very often in clinical practice
- Greater focus on content relevant to clinical practice



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### Current exam content emphasizes use of knowledge

- Professional Standards (weighted 7%)
  - Understand and apply standards
  - Knowledge of impact of diversity
- Record Review and Research (weighted 15%)
  - Determine diagnostic information needed
  - Apply research methods and statistics
- Assessment Methods (weighted 43%)
  - Apply methods to diverse populations
  - Evaluate assessment tools for use
  - Apply psychometric knowledge
  - Interpret neuropsych test performance
- Case Formulation (weighted 25%)
  - Apply knowledge of contextual factors
  - Understand and apply developmental factors
- Intervention and Clinical Management (weighted 10%)
  - Translate findings into recommendations

[https://theabcpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/17\\_Written\\_Examination\\_Instructions.pdf](https://theabcpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/17_Written_Examination_Instructions.pdf)



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### What you will find on the exam

- Scenarios for you to interpret and apply what you know
- Consistent wording of multiple-choice questions
  - Questions will typically end in a stem which can be completed by any of the four choices
  - All four choices will be plausible answers
  - No “all of the above,” “none of the above,” kind of answers
  - No “all of the following are true EXCEPT...”
- Questions that reflect what neuropsychologists do, and need to know, on a daily basis.



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### Scoring on the current exam

- Raw score is converted to scaled score that varies from 100 to 400
  - Allows for easier comparison across exam versions
- Passing score is set at 300
  - Not a norm referenced test
  - Not graded on a curve
- The exam is criterion referenced
  - Passing standard set based on knowledge expectation for entry level competence
  - Passing score remains the same regardless of how other candidates perform



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Passing Feedback:

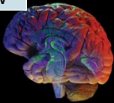
Congratulations on passing the ABCN Written Examination!

Your Scaled Score	Pass	Fail
300	300 and above	299 or below

Fail Feedback:

We regret to inform you that you did not receive a passing score.

Your Scaled Score	Pass	Fail
299	300 and above	299 or below



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Fail Feedback will include greater detail

A breakdown of your section scores is provided below to help guide your remediation efforts.

Test Section	Your Performance
Professional Standards	Green
Record Review and Research	Red
Assessment Methods	Yellow
Case Formulation	Red
Intervention and Clinical Management	Green



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Acting on Fail Feedback

- You should not assume that strong performance in a test section will automatically occur on your next exam.
- Section scores can vary between attempts, particularly for sections with a low number of questions.
- Study for the whole exam, paying special attention to areas of weakness.



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### Hints for the Written Exam



1. You already know how to take multiple choice exams. You've been to graduate school. This is what you do!
2. Study! Don't just take it the first time to see how you do. That's financially and emotionally costly.
3. Start studying early. This is not an exam to cram for.
4. Join a study group even if you are a lone wolf.
5. Study resources are at the end of this presentation.

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### Question #17

Isn't the ABCN Written Exam biased against pediatric neuropsychologists?



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### No

- Adult and pediatric clinical scenarios are incorporated in the board written exam, but the goal is for all questions to be general enough to be answered by adult and pediatric specialists
- ABCN has always included child and pediatric neuropsychologists among its numbers and mandates that adult *and* pediatric neuropsychologists constitute their BOD.
- But there is an explicit assumption that Pediatric Neuropsychology is a subspecialty that develops subsequent to general competence in clinical neuropsychology (hence a separate written exam for the subspecialty credential)



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Question #18

What is the pass rate for the written exam?



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Varies...

- From 1994 to 2021, average pass rate for the written exam was 71%
- Comparable to pass rate for Neurology boards for years in which we have comparison
- **Anecdotally**, this is roughly comparable to the ABPP Forensic Psychology Board written exam pass rate
- There is some fluctuation from year to year, but in 21 of last 28 years, cumulative pass rate has been above 60% (and has hit 80%)
- Periodic item analysis is done to ensure items are performing appropriately



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Books Specifically on Board Certification

- Armstrong, Beebe, Hilsabeck & Kirkwood (2019), *Board certification in clinical neuropsychology: A guide to becoming ABPP/ABCN certified without sacrificing your sanity*, Oxford University Press.
- Stucky, Kirkwood, & Donders (2020), *The clinical neuropsychology study guide and board review*, Oxford University Press.
  - Sections covering the foundations of clinical neuropsychology, fundamentals of assessment, and specific disorders/ conditions
  - Detailed charts and summary tables
  - Concise coverage of pediatric, adult, and geriatric issues and conditions
  - Over 500 mock exam questions



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Other Books

Look for the latest editions of:

- Bush, *Ethical decision making in clinical neuropsychology*, Oxford University Press.
- Lezak, Howieson, Bigler, & Tranel, *Neuropsychological assessment*, Oxford University Press
- Blumenfeld, *Neuroanatomy through clinical cases*, Sinauer Associates
- Woolsey & Hanaway, *The brain atlas*, Fitzgerald Science Press.
- Kandel, Schwartz, & Jessel, *Principles of neural science*, Appleton & Lange.
- Adams & Victor, *Principles of neurology*, McGraw-Hill.
- Kolb & Wishaw, *Fundamentals of human neuropsychology*, Worth.
- Heilman & Valenstein, *Clinical neuropsychology*, Oxford University Press
- Irani, *Cultural diversity in neuropsychological assessment*, Routledge



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Other Books & Resources (continued)

- Morgan & Ricker, *Textbook of clinical neuropsychology*, Taylor & Francis.
- Morgan, Baron, & Ricker, *Casebook of clinical neuropsychology*, Oxford University Press.
- Weiner, Goetz, Shin & Lewis, *Neurology for the non-neurologist*, Lippincott. Vanderah & Gould (2015), *Nolte's the human brain: An introduction to its functional neuroanatomy*, Mosby.
- Published AACN and American Academy of Neurology Practice Guidelines (pertaining to neuropsychology)
- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
- APA Code of Ethics



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Journals

- Read major published review articles in neuropsychology
- Look through a full year of issues of the major neuropsychology journals to see what you might have missed
- Form a journal club with colleagues so you'll make a regular habit of reading some of the major journals



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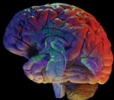
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Take home points....

- Don't try to cut corners in your fellowship training
- Document your learning activities
- Don't stall
- Enjoy reviewing the material that made you want to become a neuropsychologist
- Utilize your network for support in the boarding process
- Plan a reward for yourself for completion of each step

On to the next phase....



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BUT FIRST.....

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR  
EVALUATION???



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Reminder of the Steps

- Credential Review
- Written Exam
- Practice Sample Review
- Oral Exam

You will be evaluated on the foundational  
and functional competencies key to the  
practice of clinical neuropsychology



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Competencies

- Functional
  - Assessment
  - Intervention
  - Consultation
- Foundational
  - Scientific knowledge and methods
  - Evidence based practice
  - Individual and cultural diversity
  - Ethical legal standards and policy
  - Professionalism
  - Relationships
  - Interdisciplinary systems
  - Reflective Practice/Self-Assessment/Self-Care.



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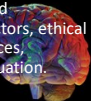
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Assessment

- Candidates should be well versed in the application of appropriate evaluative methods for different patient populations and problems in a variety of contexts.
- They should be knowledgeable about test construction, standardization, validation, or related psychometric issues as applied to clinical neuropsychological assessment techniques.
- Candidates are evaluated on assessment practices, profile interpretation, communication of results, and use of assessment results.
- Candidates are evaluated on the ability to understand and appropriately address individual and cultural diversity factors, ethical issues, and legal issues as they relate to assessment choices, interpretation of results, intervention, and outcome evaluation.



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Intervention

- Candidates must demonstrate knowledge of potential treatments and interventions to address the cognitive and behavioral problems observed on neuropsychological assessment.
- Knowledge of evidence based intervention methods and a rationale appropriate to address deficits in cognition
- In some forms of professional practice, assessment and intervention are integral parts of the same process. In other clinical circumstances, specific recommendations for managing the problem are made through referrals to other appropriate professionals.
- Candidates should be able to demonstrate informed decision making regarding choice of therapeutic or environmental interventions to address cognitive, behavioral, or psychosocial deficits in the context of considerations regarding individual diversity and life circumstances.



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Consultation

- Candidates must demonstrate the ability to communicate and apply knowledge in consultation with others such as health care professionals from other disciplines, educational personnel, social service agencies, nursing homes, rehabilitation staff, industry, legal systems, public policy makers, and individuals in other institutions and settings.
- They must be skilled at clarifying the referral question and effectively communicating results to referring/treating providers and patients.
- Candidates who are professionally involved in non-evaluative settings such as clinical research or as policy consultants should demonstrate effective collaboration and integration of neuropsychological science and practice as appropriate.



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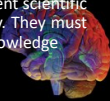
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Scientific Knowledge & Methods

- Candidates must be knowledgeable about the research basis of clinical neuropsychological practice as defined by the core knowledge base domains described in the Houston Conference guidelines for education and training in neuropsychology.
- These include research methodology in clinical populations, neurodevelopment, psychopathology, functional neuroanatomy, clinical syndromes, and specialized neuropsychological assessment techniques.
- Candidates must be knowledgeable of the history of clinical neuropsychology and demonstrate familiarity with recent scientific and scholarly developments in clinical neuropsychology. They must also be able to demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge appropriately in clinical practice.



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Evidence Based Practice

- The clinical neuropsychologist must be knowledgeable of the recent literature on normal and abnormal brain development and function, assessment methods, and intervention strategies and must be able to apply this knowledge according to evidence-based practice concepts.



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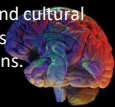
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Individual and Cultural Diversity

- Awareness of all aspects of individual and cultural diversity and how these issues inform assessment, consultation, intervention, and scientific knowledge must be demonstrated.
- Candidates must recognize the impact of cultural, linguistic, socio-environmental, and other areas of diversity as they pertain to cognitive development and brain function/dysfunction.
- They must also be aware of their own individual and cultural characteristics as they influence functioning across competency domains and interpersonal interactions.



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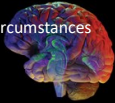
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Ethical, Legal Standards & Policy

A successful candidate is aware of:

- Current APA/CPA ethical principles and practice standards
- Current statutory and regulatory provisions applicable to professional practice
- The implications of these principles to protect patients, society, and the profession
- How to recognize and avoid adverse ethical and legal circumstances and address them appropriately.



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Professionalism

- Clinical neuropsychologists must understand their role in different contexts and systems relevant to clinical populations served.
- They must remain current in knowledge and skills of brain-behavior assessment and, whenever appropriate, contribute to advancements in the field.
- They should strive to continuously improve their practice and comport themselves in a professional manner and retain a professional demeanor at all times, including in all verbal, nonverbal, and written communications.
- Candidates should recognize their professional accountability and be amenable to external review.



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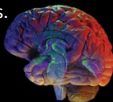
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Relationships

- Candidates must demonstrate the ability to interact effectively with patients, caregivers, and other providers.
- They must be able to establish effective working relationships across systems of care and communicate effectively with others about brain behavior relationships.
- They should demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to issues regarding the welfare, rights, and dignity of others, and they must be aware of their own impact on others.



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Interdisciplinary Systems

- Candidates must demonstrate knowledge of key issues and concepts in related disciplines (e.g., neurology, psychiatry, neuroradiology, rehabilitation, education) and the ability to communicate and interact knowledgeably with professionals across these disciplines.
- Candidates should be able to articulate the roles of other professionals with regard to patient care, integrate the perspectives of related disciplines into their case conceptualizations, display the ability to work as a member of interdisciplinary teams, and collaborate with other professionals to contribute neuropsychological information to overall team diagnostic formulation, planning, and intervention.



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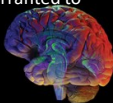
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Reflective Practice,  
Self-Assessment/Self-Care

- Candidates must demonstrate personal and professional self-awareness and the ability to monitor and evaluate their own professional performance.
- Processes for ongoing analysis of their skill set and knowledge base should be articulated.
- They must recognize the limits of their own competence and seek consultation and/or additional training as warranted to meet the needs of their patients.



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**Web Sites:**

[www.abpp.org](http://www.abpp.org)  
[www.theabcn.org](http://www.theabcn.org)  
[www.theaacn.org](http://www.theaacn.org)  
<https://brinaaacn.org/>

**ABCN Candidate Manual:**  
<https://theabcn.org/candidate-manual/>

**AACN resources:**  
<https://theaacn.org/students/board-certification/>

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**Be Ready for the ABPP Board in Neuropsychology (BRAIN)** <https://brinaaacn.org/>

- BRAIN is a study group that was started by ABCN candidates in 2002
- Over 100 members
- At all stages of candidacy (some people just considering applying)
- Manages a listserv of candidates
- Share study tips and notes
- Provides support and guidance
- Platform for developing study groups
- New members require a sponsor (member of AACN or BRAIN)



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**AACN Mentorship Program**

- Accessible through AACN website
- Purpose is to provide guidance and support to neuropsychology doctoral students who lack access to faculty or practicum mentors
- Program identifies and arranges for an appropriate mentor
- Mentor provides information, helps mentee develop goals and action plan, and facilitates contact with other professionals
- Mentors are
  - Current AACN members
  - Donate their time
  - Racially, ethnically, and gender diverse if mentee expresses a preference related to identity



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