



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

A Member Board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Academic Pathway: A Pilot Alternate Pathway to ABPN Certification Eligibility

What is ABPN's Academic Pathway?

Currently the ABPN only recognizes residency training that is accredited by the ACGME or by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. This pilot provides an alternate pathway to eligibility for ABPN certification for psychiatrists and neurologists who do not meet standard ABPN eligibility criteria but have demonstrated accomplishments and future potential as academic faculty members.

Do physicians completing the Academic Pathway bypass the ABPN certification examination?

No. The Academic Pathway is an alternate pathway to certification *eligibility*, which allows recognition of specialty training other than ACGME-accredited training. To become certified by the ABPN, physicians completing the pathway must meet all other standard requirements, including passing the ABPN certification examination.

What fields are available through the ABPN Academic Pathway?

The Academic Pathway is *only* for certification eligibility in an *ABPN primary specialty*, i.e., in psychiatry, neurology, or neurology with special qualification in child neurology. The pathway does *not* lead directly to eligibility for any subspecialty certification.

What about subspecialty certification for physicians who go through the Academic Pathway?

All physicians seeking ABPN certification in a subspecialty must meet standard eligibility criteria, which includes achieving ABPN certification in the primary specialty and also completing an ACGME-accredited subspecialty fellowship. However, please note that successful completion of an ACGME-accredited fellowship *after* (non-ACGME-accredited) primary specialty training, but *prior* to entering the Academic Pathway, would become eligible to sit for the ABPN subspecialty examination *after* completing the Academic Pathway, becoming certified by ABPN in the primary specialty, and meeting all other requirements for the subspecialty certification.

When will the Academic Pathway be available?

The new pilot will be open to qualified applicants beginning with the 2026 certification examinations. It will remain available each year through the examinations in 2032.

What happens after 2032?

The ABPN will be monitoring the outcomes of the pilot throughout its years of existence. If the ABPN decides to make the Pathway, or a modified version of the Pathway, available after 2032, an announcement will be made public at that time.

Why is ABPN offering this Pathway?

Experiences with other specialty boards indicate that an Academic Pathway is a feasible and helpful way to give more physicians the opportunity to pursue ABPN specialty certification. The Academic Pathway also provides an opportunity for programs at academic health centers, some facing challenges with faculty recruitment and retention, to draw on a broader pool of faculty candidates.

Who qualifies for the Academic Pathway?

Specific qualifications are spelled out [here](#).

Do I need to provide anything from my medical school or residency program?

Yes. Documentation must be provided as proof of each of the specific qualifications found [here](#), including completion of medical school with the awarding of a doctoral-level medical degree as well as completion of at least 4 years of residency training in the primary specialty.

Do I need to provide anything from the U.S. institution where I have an academic faculty appointment?

Yes. As noted in the [qualifications page](#), the department chair from the institution must complete and submit the ABPN [attestation form](#).

How do I apply for the Academic Pathway?

Physicians meeting qualifications may apply for the ABPN certification examination in their primary specialty (Psychiatry, Neurology, or Neurology with Special Qualification in Child Neurology). To apply, applicants should email Questions@abpn.org and request a special Academic Pathway application. Please put “Academic Pathway application request” in the subject line of the email. As part of the application process, applicants will receive confirmation from the ABPN whether they have met all qualifications for the Pathway.

The examination [application deadlines](#) are posted on the ABPN website. In addition to the standard examination fee, applicants to the Academic Pathway must pay an additional non-refundable \$350 evaluation/processing fee.

I am a potential applicant considering taking an academic faculty position. Is there a way for me to learn ‘in advance’, before beginning a faculty appointment, whether my education and training meet the ABPN’s qualifications for the academic pathway?

Yes. For these purposes, ABPN will provide ‘pre-eligibility’ letters to prospective applicants beginning or in the midst of the requisite four-year faculty appointment. However, physicians may only apply for the ABPN certification

examination after meeting *all* requirements and receiving formal ABPN approval of their full qualifications. Prospective applicants interested in obtaining a pre-eligibility letter should email Questions@abpn.org and request a special Academic Pathway application. Please put “Academic Pathway pre-eligibility request” in the subject line of the email. Department chairs seeking a pre-eligibility letter from a prospective or current faculty member should direct the applicant to email ABPN.

I am a department chair considering hiring a physician as academic faculty in anticipation of the physician ultimately becoming eligible for ABPN certification. Is there a way for me to learn ‘in advance’ whether the physician’s education and training meet the ABPN’s qualifications for the academic pathway?

Yes. Please ask the candidate physician to obtain a ‘pre-eligibility’ letter as above. (The physician must ask ABPN for this directly, as they need to supply the requisite documentation to the ABPN.) As well, you should please review the ABPN’s [department chair attestation form](#). While you cannot complete this form until the applicant has completed the requisite 4 years on faculty, it is important that you know in advance what you would need to attest, as part of the requirements for your faculty member to fully qualify for the ABPN academic pathway.

I just received an approval letter from ABPN for the Academic Pathway. Is there a time limit to when I must sit for and pass the ABPN certification examination?

Yes. Physicians must become Board certified within seven years of ABPN approval of the Academic Pathway, i.e., within seven years of the date of they receive an approval letter. Physicians who do not achieve certification within this seven-year period must reapply for Academic Pathway eligibility, i.e., they must again meet all requirements specified for the Pathway at the time of re-application.