



Frequently Asked Questions Credentialing Maintenance Program

General

Q. If I successfully recertify with the National Registry of Certified Microbiologists (NRCM), will I automatically receive my ABSA CBSP credentials?

A. No, these recertifying bodies are completely separate and the criteria for each differ. The ABSA credential focuses heavily on activities associated with the practice of biological safety, while the criteria for the NRCM emphasize the microbiology.

Q. Why is it not possible to submit the same paperwork for NRCM and ABSA certification and recertification?

A. ABSA and NRCM enjoy a partnership as independent organizations with distinct missions. Accordingly, differing credentialing requirements exist for categories such as experience, the nature and extent of continuing education, professional service, and certification renewal frequency.

Q. If I have problems accumulating enough points for my appointed cycle, can I request to be switched to another cycle?

A. Individuals up for renewal will not be moved to another credentialing maintenance cycle. If there are extraordinary circumstances that prevented you from acting as a biosafety professional for some period of time, you can request that the CMB consider altering your cycle. This will be done on a case-by-case basis.

Q. If I hold both the CBSP and RBP credentials, do I need to go through the maintenance program twice?

A. No. If you hold both credentials, you will follow the cycle for your CBSP renewal.

Q. What if I have my RBP and part way through my credentialing maintenance cycle I obtain my CBSP?

A. Your cycle will be re-set to start on January 1 of the year following the date you receive the CBSP. This will be the beginning of a 5-year cycle. The RBP remains current and is renewed with the CBSP cycle.

Q. Is there an emeritus status for CBSP and RBP or another similar option for retirees?

A. Yes. If you are an RBP/CBSP in good standing, are retired, and no longer gainfully employed in professional biosafety work you may apply for emeritus status. If you choose to request re-instatement as a CBSP or RBP, you will be required to submit documentation showing continued CM point accumulation.

CM Points

Q. Are P.A.C.E.[®] Contact Hours equivalent to Credentialing Maintenance (CM) points?

A. No, CM points are based on hours of involvement, which may not agree with the number of P.A.C.E.[®] Contact Hours awarded. The scale for CM points is: 0.5 points for 4 hours of class or meeting attendance, and 1.0 CM point for a full day of attendance. Therefore, attendance at the 3 full day ABSA Conference is worth 3 CM points. For classes/meetings that are less

than half a day, equivalent CM points will be awarded. The complete explanation of the point system can be found in the Credentialing Maintenance Program document on the ABSA website <http://www.absa.org/biocmp.html>.

Q. If a professional development course is approved by another professional organization, is it automatically approved by ABSA for certification points?

A. No, unless the professional development course is offered by ABSA or an official ABSA-affiliate or partner. Sponsors or attendees of non-ABSA courses must apply to ABSA before CM points will be granted. The CMB will determine whether points will be awarded based on relevance of the course content to the biosafety field.

Q. I have successfully submitted courses to NRCM for recertification. Are they automatically approved for ABSA recertification?

A. No, since NRCM requires only "microbiology activities" for continuing education, not necessarily biosafety-related activities. If you have a continuing education activity that is not sponsored by ABSA or an official ABSA affiliate, you must still submit an "Application for Certification Maintenance Credit" for review.

Q. Why don't I get the full Credentialing Maintenance credit when I am facilitating an ABSA-sponsored course?

A. Facilitators are present primarily to ensure that the participants in an ABSA-sponsored course have indeed registered, signed the attendance roster, received course materials, have someone to speak to regarding room comfort, supplies, seating, breaks and lunch, etc. and that the instructors stay within the course schedule. In many cases, the facilitator(s) may or may not be present for the entire course content, if they have to deal with these issues. Also, facilitators are already receiving 0.5 Certification Maintenance points (CMs) per year for their service on the Professional Development Team.

Q. I am a member of an international biosafety association, and have taken courses at these association meetings. Why have I been asked to submit documentation as to the content of the sessions?

A. You belong to an international biosafety association that is not an official affiliate or partner of ABSA. Unless your association is listed as an affiliate on the ABSA website (<http://www.absa.org/affmap.html>) the courses must be reviewed for content and inclusion in the "Professional Development Activities approved for Credentialing Maintenance Credit" list on the ABSA website. Please complete an "Application for Credentialing Maintenance Credit". Automatic approval of your conference/meeting courses is a good reason to urge your association to obtain official affiliate status with ABSA.

Q. What if I forgot to get my classes approved for CM points, and my recertification packet is due?

A. Go ahead and submit the CM Application forms along with your Credentialing Maintenance Worksheet and they will be reviewed prior to review of the Credentialing Maintenance Worksheet. CM Applications should be submitted as soon as possible.

Q. What do I need to submit to get a non-ABSA course approved for CM points?

A. The Application for Credentialing Maintenance Credit (found on the ABSA website) should be submitted along with the agenda, handouts, or syllabus from the course. The application form must be printed (handwritten applications will not be accepted) and completely filled out.

Q. How do I know whether a non-ABSA course has been approved for CM points?

A. The information on approved courses is on the ABSA website with the Credentialing Maintenance Program material. Each approved course is assigned an approval number and information covering the course name, location, date and number of points awarded. **Remember to include the course approval number in your credentialing maintenance worksheet.**

Q. Other professional agencies approve the entire ABSA Conference for credit for their certified professionals. Why don't I get full credit for their conferences (ABIH, CSHEMA, etc.) toward my RBP/CBSP CM points?

A. The CMB will only approve material relevant to the field of biosafety for CM points. Biosafety is one of the specifically-approved specialty (rubric) areas for industrial hygienists; consequently, such an approval is warranted for their credentials. If you attend the IH conference, you need to submit information on the specific biosafety-related session(s) or course(s) you attended along with information on the content and duration. This is also true for other conferences, such as CSHEMA, that offer broad environmental health and safety content.

Q. Why did my application for CM credits for a course get turned down?

A. One reason might be that the course material was not sufficiently related to biosafety to merit CM points. More than likely you have provided an insufficient amount of information on criteria such as the length of the course or the actual course time spent on biosafety related topics, or more details are needed showing the course's relevance to biosafety. It would be helpful if you also submitted a course agenda with a description of topics covered, etc.

Recertification Activities

Q. Can I list my membership in NRCM as an affiliate membership?

A. No. NRCM, ASM, CSHEMA, etc. are not ABSA affiliates.

Q. If I serve on an IBC, IACUC, or IRB committee at my place of employment, can I claim those committee memberships for CM points?

A. No, you cannot -- if they are part of your regular job responsibilities, they are covered in the basic points awarded for serving as a biosafety professional (category 1).

Q. If I teach a biosafety course as part of my job responsibilities, can I list and count it for CM points?

A. No, CM points are given for professional biosafety practice based on your employment status and would include those activities that are performed as part of your job (category 1). Credentialing maintenance (CM) points for teaching will be given when courses are biosafety-related, are performed outside of your job responsibilities and are approved by the CMB when offered by a non-ABSA organization.

Q. I am a consultant, and all of the training I deliver and courses I teach could be considered "part of my job" and not allowable for points. Is there any way around this?

A. In this case, it may be advisable for you to claim all of your lectures/training, etc. for points, and forgo claiming the 2 points/year under Category 1 (Professional Biosafety Practice). If you do not claim the Category 1 points, all of your training and lecture activities will count individually in Categories 4, 6, 7, and 8.

Q. I am a university professor, and manage a BSL-3 facility. However, I am not the BSO, and I do teach several courses in microbiology. How can I maintain my credentials, if teaching the courses is "part of my job"?

A. If you do not claim the Category 1 points for Professional Biosafety Practice, you can list all of the courses you teach each year for points, based on the number of credit hours (2.0 CMs/semester hour). A specific course can only be claimed once/year, however.

Q. If I produce a handbook, video or other instructional presentation or publication as part of my normal job duties, can I claim CM points for this activity?

A. Normally, if you are preparing educational materials as part of your job, you cannot claim them as Professional Publications and Presentations (category 4). These activities are covered as part of your Category 1 biosafety professional points. However, if other biosafety professionals will be taking that course, or watching that video, you can submit those for CM approval for the attendees.

Q. How are publications evaluated for CM credit?

A. CM points will be given only for biosafety related publications. To count as biosafety-related, the contents of the publication must be clearly relevant to one or more of tasks on the NRCM task list. If a publication's focus is on basic science with no specific relevance to any of the NRCM tasks, CM points will not be awarded.

Q. Will my Master's or PhD work apply to my credential maintenance?

A. If the courses or dissertation apply to biosafety they will be considered for CM points under Category 8, College/ University Courses.

Q. If I attend a multi-day Hazardous Material Shipping course, incident command, emergency response, or HAZWOPER course, can I claim one CM point for each day of training?

A. You can claim only the part of the course that applies to shipping or working with biological materials -- usually about 1/2 day or less (or 0.5 CM point). If this course is not previously approved (i.e., ABSA sponsored course or another course on the approved list) you will still need to submit for CM approval. If you have a description of the course that shows there was significantly more coverage of biosafety issues, it could be approved for additional points, as long as the documentation is clear as to the biosafety related content.

Q. If I take a course several times during a credentialing maintenance cycle, do I get credit each time? For example, a shipping class which I must take every few years, or a dissertation course for my graduate work?

A. If it's the same course you take several times during that cycle, you may only get credit for it once during the cycle. If it is different courses on the same topic, you can get credit for each of them.

Q. If I teach the same course multiple times per year, do I get credit each time?

A. You can only get credit for teaching a course once per year.

Q. What if I've had a personal situation (extended medical leave, military deployment, natural disaster affecting my workplace) that prevented me from earning CM points during a portion of my cycle?

A. Contact the Credentialing Maintenance Board BEFORE the date your recertification application is due explaining the situation if it impacted your ability to earn points for 6

months or longer. A form is available on the credentialing maintenance website to submit the necessary information. We don't need personal medical information, but we may request documentation from your employer verifying the length of time you were unable to earn points. The Board will consider your application and, if approved, will advise you of the modifications to your cycle.

Q. How is service on an ABSA committee counted for CM points. If service begins during the annual conference in October but the cycle runs the calendar year, will I receive full credit?

A. Month and year of service should be identified on the worksheets. Less than a full year of service will be prorated.

Q. How can I maintain my CBSP/RBP credentials when I am not funded to attend the ABSA conference and/or pre-conference courses?

A. ABSA has been working to provide information on free/low-cost/no-travel solutions to acquiring Certification Maintenance (CM) points. For example, there is now a listing of pre-approved CDC MMWR free on-line courses (<http://www.absa.org/eduonline.html>), the ABSA Calendar has information on free or low cost webinars and workshops, Affiliates are encouraged to post their meetings on the ABSA Calendar, etc. In addition, there are quizzes available to obtain CM points for reading the ABSA Journal and/or reviewing the ABSA Animal Handling DVDs. ABSA is developing additional webinars and on-line training that will not require travel expenses. Any local or online biosafety-related activities can be submitted for review to determine how many points they are worth; the points don't have to come from just ABSA and affiliate-related activities.

Q. If I am unable to accumulate enough points during my 5-year cycle and am granted a 1-year extension, is that 1-year period independent of the 5-year cycle? Can I attend a course once during the 5-year cycle and again during the 1-year extension?

A. No. The extension is considered part of the recertification cycle (extending it to 6-years). If it's the same course, you may only get credit for it once during the cycle.

Q. What if I don't agree with the outcome of the Board's decision on my credential renewal?

A. The Board will advise you if there's additional information you may supply. This is considered the first step in the appeal. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, and you feel there were procedural and/or factual issues with the decision, you can submit a written appeal to the ABSA Council.

Q: How does the Credentialing Evaluation Board (CEB) and Credentialing Maintenance Board (CMB) ensure unbiased review of renewal submissions?

A. The Boards evaluate each submission based on a transparent and uniform set of criteria, and conflict of interest provisions have been established. Board members are approved by ABSA Council and adhere to a high standard of professional integrity and ethics. ABSA members are encouraged to approach the CEB/CMB regarding any concerns of bias.