FAQ’s on the Credentialing Maintenance (CM) Program

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

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 (CM) cycle.

Q. If I missed submitting recertification documentation and did not apply for an extension, can I request to be switched to another cycle?
A. No. Failure to submit a CM worksheet during the appointed cycle will result in suspension of credentials. Credentials may be reinstated in accordance with policy and procedures described in the Credentialing Maintenance (CM) Program Guide.

Q. If I hold both the CBSP(ABSA) and RBP(ABSA) credentials, do I need to go through the CM program twice?
A. No. If you hold both credentials, you will follow the cycle for your CBSP(ABSA) renewal.

Q. What if I have my RBP(ABSA) and part way through my CM cycle I obtain my CBSP(ABSA)?
A. Your cycle will be re-set to start on January 1 of the year following the date you receive the CBSP(ABSA). This will be the beginning of a 5-year cycle. The RBP(ABSA) remains current and is renewed with the CBSP(ABSA) cycle.

Q. Is there an emeritus status for CBSP(ABSA) and RBP(ABSA) or similar option for retirees?
A. Yes. If you are an RBP/CBSP(ABSA) in good standing, are retired, and no longer gainfully employed in professional biosafety work you may apply for emeritus membership status. If you choose to request re-instatement as a CBSP(ABSA) or RBP(ABSA), 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 complete explanation of the point system can be found in the CM Program Guide.
Q. If a professional development course/activity is approved by another professional organization, is it automatically approved by ABSA for CM points?
   A. No. Sponsors or attendees of non-ABSA courses must submit an Application for Credentialing Maintenance (CM) Points before CM points will be reviewed and granted. The Credentialing Maintenance Board (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 CM Points for review.

Q. Why don't I get the full CM 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, 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.

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 biosafety content of the sessions?
   A. Unless your association is an official affiliate, the courses must be reviewed for content and inclusion in the Professional Development Activities list on the ABSA website. An Application for CM Points will need to be submitted for review.

Q. What if I forgot to get my course/activity approved for CM points, and my recertification packet is due?
   A. Go ahead and submit the Application for CM Points and submit your CM Worksheet to the ABSA Office. The CM applications will be reviewed prior to review of the CM worksheet. CM Applications should be submitted as soon as possible to the date the course is offered while information on the course is still readily available but can be submitted later if necessary though this may delay the recertification process.

Q. Why do I need to get a non-ABSA course approved for CM points?
   A. Approval from the CMB must be obtained before CM points are awarded to non-ABSA-sponsored courses. The CMB wants to ensure that the material covered in non-ABSA courses pertains to, and is relevant to, biosafety to determine how many CM points should be awarded.

Q. How do I know whether a non-ABSA course has been approved for CM points?
   A. Approved courses are posted on the ABSA website Professional Development Activities list. Each approved course is assigned an approval number and information covering the course name, location, date and number of points awarded.
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 maintenance 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 (hours and/or days). 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 or insufficient information was provided to merit CM points. Criteria such as the length of the course, time spent on biosafety related topics, as well as details showing the course’s biosafety content. Courses under one hour will not be reviewed.

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). However, if your service on these committees is not part of your assigned job responsibilities then you may be able to claim appropriate credit (Category 3).

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). 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 (Category 7).

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. 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. Keep in mind, you can only receive credit for teaching a course once per year.

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 these courses are "part of my job"?
   A. If you do not claim the Category 1 points, you can list all of the courses you teach each year for points (Category 8), based on the number of credit hours (semester hour). A specific course can only be claimed once per 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 Category 4. These activities are covered as part of your Category 1 points.

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 CBSP Exam Content (Domain) task list. If a publication's focus is on basic science with no specific relevance to any of the CBSP Exam Content, CM points will not be awarded.

Q. Will my Master's or PhD work apply in maintaining my credentials?
   A. If the courses or dissertation apply to biosafety, they will be considered for CM points under Category 8, College/University Courses. These must be reviewed and approved by submitting an Application for CM Points.

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/working with biological materials. These must be reviewed and approved by submitting an Application for CM Points.

Q. If I take a course several times during a CM 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 will 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 (i.e. extended medical leave, military deployment, or a natural disaster affecting my workplace) that prevented me from earning CM points during a portion of my certification cycle?
   A. Submit the “Request for Consideration (Extenuating Circumstance)” BEFORE the date your recertification application is due. We may request documentation from your employer verifying the length of time you were unable to earn points. The CM 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 ABSA’s Annual Conference but the cycle runs the calendar year, will I receive full credit?
   A. Month and year of service should be identified on the CM worksheets. Less than a full year of service will be prorated.
Q. How can I maintain my CBSP/RBP(ABSA) credentials when I am not funded to attend the ABSA Conference and/or professional development courses?
   A. ABSA has been working to provide information on free/low-cost/no-travel solutions to acquiring CM points. For example, the ABSA Biosafety Calendar has information on free or low-cost webinars and workshops. In addition, there are quizzes available to obtain CM points for reading the ABSA Journal and/or reviewing the ABSA Animal Handling DVDs. Any local or online biosafety-related activities can be submitted for review; the points don't have to come only from ABSA or affiliate-related.

Q. What are ways to maintain my CBSP/RBP(ABSA) credentials in addition to taking courses?
   A. There are many opportunities to obtain CM points. For example, join an ABSA committee or Task Force, join Affiliates (max. of 2), serve on an Affiliate Committee, or serve as a community IBC member.

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 will only get credit for it once during the cycle.

Q. What if I don’t agree with the outcome of the CMB's decision on my credential renewal?
   A. The CMB will advise you if there's additional information needed for determination. 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 do the Credentialing Evaluation Board (CEB) and Credentialing Maintenance Board (CMB) ensure unbiased review of renewal submissions?
   A. The independent 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.