Frequently Asked Questions

Credentialing Maintenance (CM) Program – FAQ

General

In order to access the Application for CM Points, you must be logged into the ABSA website (you do not need to be an ABSA member). Additional information is found in the CM Program Guide listed on the credentialing page. Activities that are less than 1 hour will not receive CM Points. Some questions are cross listed throughout the FAQ for easier comprehension.

1. If I hold both ABSA credentials, do I need to go through the maintenance process twice?
   No. If you hold both credentials, you will follow the cycle from the last credential awarded. Your cycle will re-set to start on January 1 of the year following the date the last credential was awarded.

2. Is there an emeritus membership status option for CBSP(ABSA) and RBP(ABSA) retirees?
   Yes. If you are an RBP or CBSP in good standing, are retired, and no longer gainfully employed in professional biosafety work, you may apply for emeritus membership status.

3. Are P.A.C.E.® Contact Hours equivalent to ABSA CM points?
   No, CM points are based on hours of involvement, which may not agree with the number of P.A.C.E.® contact hours awarded. P.A.C.E.® credit will not count toward the 40-hour requirement for recertification.

4. How do the Credentialing Evaluation Board (CEB) and CMB ensure unbiased review of renewal submissions?
   The CEB & CMB 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 the ABSA Council and adhere to a high standard of professional integrity and ethics.

CM Point Overview (effective prior to January 1, 2023)

The point system (per hour) for Attendees, Instructors, and Facilitator are as follows: Note, these points should be used for the 2018-2022 cycle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours of Education</th>
<th>Attendee</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-8 hours</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-&lt;6 hours</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-&lt;3 hours</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-&lt;2</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>2 of these = .125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CM Point Overview (effective for activities dated January 1, 2023 and after)

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<tr>
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<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-&lt;6</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-&lt;5 hours</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
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Section 1: Professional Biosafety Practice

1. Why don’t I receive ABSA CM credit for individual courses when I complete biosafety trainings mandated by my own institution?

Biosafety trainings required for one’s job may not be claimed for CM points because credit for these activities is applied under Professional Biosafety Practice (Section 1), found on the CM worksheet. Examples include BBP training, and biosafety training. Professional elective developmental trainings may be eligible for CM points by submitting the Application for CM Points. You have the option to claim training for points under Sections 6 and 7 (Professional Development Activities) and forgo claiming the 2 points/year under Section 1.

2. If I attend a multi-day "Hazardous Material Shipping", "Incident Command", "Emergency Response", or another similar course, can I claim one (1) ABSA CM point for each day of training?

Only the content that applies to shipping, working with biological materials, or other biosafety topics will be considered for ABSA CM points. If you would like credit for sections of courses like those listed above, first ensure that they are not required as part of your job (Section 1 credit), then complete the Application for CM Points. Specific documentation of the biosafety parts of the course must be attached to your application. Documentation should include a course agenda with section times, copies of the course slides, or other detailed information that substantiates the biosafety topics covered and the period of time in which they were delivered.

3. If I take the same course more than once during my CM cycle, am I able to claim ABSA CM points for each time I took the course? For example, a shipping class that I must take every few years.

First, confirm whether it’s required as part of your job (Section 1 credit). If it is not required as part of your job, you may only claim CM points for this course once during your five-year cycle. If it is a different course on the same topic, not part of your job, and not already approved for CM points, you would need to apply for CM Points.

4. If I serve on an IBC, IACUC, or IRB committee(s) at my place of employment, may I claim those committee memberships for CM points?

If they are part of your job responsibilities, then they are covered in the basic points awarded for serving as a biosafety professional (Section 1). However, if your service on these committees is not part of your assigned job responsibilities, then you may be able to claim CM points under Section 3 (Technical/Professional Organization Service). For additional details, please refer to the CM Program guide on the ABSA website.

Section 2: Professional Biosafety Membership

I am a member of an “international biosafety association” and have taken courses at these association meetings. Why do I need to submit documentation as to the content of the sessions?

Unless your association is listed as an affiliate on the ABSA website, the courses must be reviewed for content and inclusion in the Professional Development Activities list on the ABSA website. Please complete the Application for CM Points. Automatic approval of your conference/meeting courses is a good reason to urge your association to obtain official affiliate status with ABSA.

Section 3 & 4: Professional Organization Service, Professional Publications and Presentations

1. 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? Month and year of service should be identified on the CM Worksheets. Less than a full year of service will be prorated.
2. If I serve on an IBC, IACUC, or IRB committee(s) at my place of employment, may I claim those committee memberships for CM points?

If they are part of your job responsibilities, then they are covered in the basic points awarded for serving as a biosafety professional (Section 1). However, if your service on these committees is not part of your assigned job responsibilities, then you may be able to claim CM points under Section 3 (Technical/Professional Organization Service). For additional details, please refer to the CM Program guide on the ABSA website.

3. How can I maintain my ABSA credential(s) when my employer is not able to pay for me to attend the ABSA conference and/or ABSA Professional Development Activities and I can’t afford to pay for them myself?

ABSA is continuously 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. Affiliates are encouraged to post their meetings on the ABSA Calendar. In addition, there are quizzes available to obtain CM points for reviewing the ABSA Animal Biosafety Videos and Applied Biosafety journals.

Webinars and online training that do not involve traveling are consistently being developed by ABSA. Any free or low cost 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. Check the Professional Development Activities list on the ABSA website. Most of the CDC courses listed there have already been approved for CM points are available online and free of charge.

Other examples include joining an ABSA Affiliate committee or Task Force (Section 3, Technical/Professional Organization Service). You may gain additional credit in Section 3 of the CM worksheet by serving as a community IBC member, if it is not part of your job duties.

4. How are publications evaluated for ABSA CM credit?

ABSA 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 list. If a publication’s focus is on basic science with no specific relevance to any of the Exam Content, CM points will not be awarded.

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

If you are preparing biosafety-related educational materials as part of your job, you cannot claim them as Professional Publications and Presentations (Section 4). These activities are covered as part of your Professional Biosafety Practice (Section 1). However, points could be claimed if you don’t claim the 2 points in Section 1.

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

You can get credit for teaching a specific course once per year for Sections 4 or 8 and only if not part of your job responsibilities.

Sections 5, 6, & 7: Professional Development Activities

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

Non-ABSA courses that have already been approved by the CMB for ABSA CM points are found in the Professional Development Activities list on the ABSA website. Each approved course is assigned an approval number and points; the course may be found by searching by course name (PDA), sponsor, or by date. These approval numbers and CM points must be included in your CM worksheet under Section 7 (Professional Development Activities, Non-ABSA Sponsored).
2. Other professional organizations 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 ABSA CM points?

The CMB will only approve material relevant to the field of biosafety for CM points. If you attend an Industrial Hygiene or other conference that has biosafety-related session(s) or course(s), you will need to submit them for ABSA CM credit using the Application for CM Points.

3. Why don't I receive ABSA CM credit for individual courses when I complete biosafety trainings mandated by my own institution?

Biosafety trainings required for one's job may not be claimed for CM points because credit for these activities is applied under Professional Biosafety Practice (Section 1), found on the CM worksheet. Examples include BBP training, and biosafety training. Professional elective developmental trainings may be eligible for CM points by submitting the Application for CM Points. You have the option to claim training for points under Sections 6 and 7 (Professional Development Activities) and forgo claiming the 2 points/year under Section 1.

4. If a non-ABSA biosafety professional development course is approved by another professional organization, is it automatically approved by ABSA for certification points?

No, not unless the professional development course is offered by ABSA or an official ABSA-affiliate or partner. Sponsors or attendees of non-ABSA biosafety courses must apply for CM Points. The Credentialing Maintenance Board (CMB) must 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. The CMB will determine whether points will be awarded based on relevance of the course content to the biosafety field and length of the course. Courses must be at a minimum of one-hour in length.

5. If I attend a multi-day “Hazardous Material Shipping”, “Incident Command”, “Emergency Response”, or another similar course, can I claim one (1) ABSA CM point for each day of training?

Only the content that applies to shipping, working with biological materials, or other biosafety topics will be considered for ABSA CM points. If you would like credit for sections of courses like those listed above, first ensure that they are not required as part of your job (Section 1 credit), then complete the Application for CM Points. Specific documentation of the biosafety parts of the course must be attached to your application. Documentation should include a course agenda with section times, copies of the course slides, or other detailed information that substantiates the biosafety topics covered and the period of time in which they were delivered.

6. If I take the same course more than once during my CM cycle, am I able to claim ABSA CM points for each time I took the course? For example, a shipping class that I must take every few years.

First, confirm whether it's required as part of your job (Section 1 credit). If it is not required as part of your job, you may only claim CM points for this course once during your five-year cycle. If it is a different course on the same topic, not part of your job, and not already approved for CM points, you would need to apply for CM Points.

Section 8: College Courses

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

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 (Section 1, Professional Biosafety Practice). CM points are available when biosafety-related courses are taught that are not part of your job responsibilities. Approval must be obtained from the CMB in advance of submitting your CM worksheet at the end of your cycle.
2. Will my Master’s or PhD work apply to maintaining my ABSA credential(s)?

If the courses or dissertation apply to biosafety, they will be considered for CM points under College/University Courses (Section 8). An Application for CM Points must be completed for each course for CM point determination.

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

You can get credit for teaching a specific course once per year for Sections 4 or 8 and only if not part of your job responsibilities.

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

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

CM Application Denied – Appeal Process

1. Why did my application for ABSA CM points get turned down?

When you receive notice of the outcome of your application for CM points, the ABSA Office informs you of the reason the CMB was unable to approve your application for CM points. There are a few main reasons that applications do not qualify for points:

- The course material was not biosafety-related to merit CM points.
- The amount of time that biosafety-related information was covered was not a minimum of one-hour in length. Note: courses cannot be combined for CM points.
- The amount of information such as actual course time spent on biosafety related topics, the length of the course or details showing the course's relevance to biosafety was insufficient.
- The material provided was a course ‘attendance certificate’. Applications should be submitted along with a course agenda or syllabus (describing topics covered) and documented time of biosafety related subjects.

2. What if I don’t agree with the outcome of the CMB’s decision on my credential renewal application?

The CMB will advise you if there’s additional information you may supply. This is considered the first step in the appeal process. 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 President. This must be completed no later than 14 days after the credential renewal denial is issued.

Maintaining Points for Recertification

1. If I have problems accumulating enough points for my appointed cycle, may I switch to another cycle? What if I forget to submit my CM Worksheet?

Individuals that are up for renewal, that do not have sufficient points, will not be moved to another CM cycle. If there has been an extreme situation that has prevented an applicant from acting as a biosafety professional for a period of time, submit a Request of Accommodations. Applicants requesting an accommodation must submit the request prior to their deadline for recertification. Accommodations will not be considered after a candidate has submitted their CM worksheets and has failed to meet the requirements for recertification. All Requests are considered on a case-by-case basis by the Credentialing Maintenance Board.

Failure to submit the CM worksheet by the deadline will result in the suspension of your ABSA credential(s). The complete explanation on reinstating your credential(s) may be found in the CM Program guide on the ABSA website.
2. Can I submit all my CM applications along with my CM Worksheet at the end of my cycle?

The CMB strongly encourages individuals to submit CM applications for review as close to the date of the activity as possible. This is beneficial to the candidate for two reasons. One, it is easier to obtain the necessary supporting documentation right after the activity occurs. And two, it provides you with a better understanding of how many points you have earned to date, in case an activity isn't approved at the level you had hoped it would be.

3. What if I overlooked submitting my courses/activities for CMB approval, am at the end of my renewal cycle and my CM Worksheet is due?

Submit your CM worksheet to the ABSA Office by the deadline. Submit your requests for CM points using the Application for CM Points form as soon as possible. The applications for CM points will be reviewed prior to the CMB review of your CM worksheet.

Consulting

I am a consultant, and all the training I deliver and courses I teach could be considered "part of my job" and not allowable for points. What is the best way to complete my CM Worksheet to maximize the points total?

In this case, it may be advisable for you to claim all your lectures and training for points and forgo claiming the 2 points/year under Professional Biosafety Practice (Section 1). If you do not claim the Section 1 points, all your training and lecture activities will count individually in categories 4, 6, 7, and 8. If teaching the same course multiple times per year, credit can only be claimed once per year.