

Eligibility Changes with the National Certification Corporation (NCC)

The National Certification Corporation (NCC) has reviewed Neonatal Nurse Practitioner (NNP) programs since 1980 when the first certification program began. This review was developed because at that time national accreditation for NP programs did not exist. With the publication of the Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) and National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) incorporation of the national Guidelines into the formal accreditation process, NCC made the decision to no longer approve or review programs. Programs are now accredited by the accrediting agencies by means of a formal accreditation process.

The accreditation organizations CCNE and NLNAC formally incorporated the national criteria into their accreditation process in 2005. This provided a much needed independent third party review. This change is impacting advanced practice nurses who graduated from programs before 2005 and have not obtained certification. Graduates prior to 2005 may have attended programs that incorporated the national criteria, however, inconsistencies in program curricula and among students in the same program were not uncommon. At this time, there is no standardized format to identify programs that might have been compliant with the national guidelines prior to 2005.

For reasons outlined above, individuals who graduated from a program prior to 2005 will no longer be eligible to take or retake the NCC NNP exam. All certified advanced practice nurses who graduated from programs prior to 2005 can maintain their certification, however, if their certification lapses they will not qualify for recertification. The only way to qualify would be to go back to a NP program that meets current NCC requirements and earn a master's or post-masters. Although we feel it is essential that CCNE and NLNAC develop certification criteria for those advanced practice nurses who attended programs prior to 2005, they have not published a statement to address this issue at this time.

NCC reviewed this change, considered the fact that NCC certification exams are entry level examinations, and made the decision to put a time limit on certification. Individual NPs have the professional responsibility to pursue certification in a timely fashion. Effective 2010 NPs will have a maximum of 3 years from the date of graduation to become certified through NCC.