

FAQs regarding the ABMS designation “Area of Focused Practice”

Q: Is an Area of Focused Practice the same as a Subspecialty?

A: No. A subspecialty recognized by the ABMS requires completion of an ACGME-approved fellowship. The ABMS requirements for each designation are listed below. (COCERT is the ABMS Committee of Certification.)

Focused Practice Criteria

1. The area of focused practice must have a sponsoring ABMS Member Board who will define the eligibility criteria and submit the application to COCERT.
2. Eligible diplomates must be certified by the sponsoring Member Board(s) and have an active primary or relevant subspecialty certificate with good standing in the community.
3. Member Boards will develop the clinical practice experience (both in terms of time and volume) beyond initial training necessary for eligibility. Formal fellowship training may count toward the practice requirement.
4. Member Boards will be required to develop requirements, including a Board-based assessment for eligible diplomates prior to awarding a focused practice designation.
5. The area of focused practice must have an MOC requirement that is determined and described by the Member Board. The MOC requirement may be fully tailored toward the area of focused practice.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PROPOSED SPECIALTIES

1. The area of specialization contains a distinct and definable patient population, a definable type of care need, a “stand alone” body of medical knowledge or unique care principles solely to meet the needs of that patient population.
2. The new area of specialization should clearly demonstrate its value in improving access, quality and coordination of care. This added value should justify any potential increase in cost of care.
3. It must be clearly demonstrated that there are sufficient numbers of training programs and trainees to sustain the area of specialization and to allow for a sustained critical mass of trainees necessary for trainee testing validity and training program accreditation.
4. There should be a periodic reassessment of approved specialties to assure that the area of clinical practice remains a distinct area of certification.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PROPOSED SUBSPECIALTIES

In addition to Guiding Principles 1-4 above, the following are additional Guiding Principles for Subspecialties:

5. The subspecialty should be an area of clinical practice that is beyond the physician’s normal scope of practice in that specialty.
6. The body of knowledge and clinical skills required must be broad enough to require at least 12 months of training.

Q: Does the American Board of Ophthalmology issue any subspecialty certificates, for example, in retina/vitreous, oculoplastic and orbital surgery, or glaucoma?

A: No, but the ABO is open to receiving requests from subspecialty societies who are interested in pursuing this option.

Q: Does the ABMS Area of Focused Practice supersede the previous designations of Certificate of Special Qualification?

A: Yes.

Q: Will a certificate be provided for an Area of Focused Practice?

A: The ABMS has left this up to the discretion of the individual Board.

Q: If a diplomate achieves an Area of Focused Practice, will this appear on his/her ABMS certification web profile?

A: No. For instance, diplomates in Internal Medicine or Family Medicine who qualify for the newly established Area of Focused Practice in Hospital Medicine will have only their primary certification (Internal Medicine or Family Medicine) on their ABMS web profile.

Q: What is the application process for developing an Area of Focused Practice?

A: The ABMS application process is as follows:

Application for an Area of Focused Practice

Upon completion, please forward this application for a new area of focused practice to Lois Margaret Nora, MD, JD, MBA, ABMS President and Chief Executive Officer, in care of David B. Swanson, PhD, at dswanson@abms.org with a copy to Paul Lawlor at plawlor@abms.org. If you need any assistance with the completion of this application, please contact Paul Lawlor.

Name of Sponsoring Board(s):

1. Provide the name of the proposed area of focused practice:

2. State the purpose of the proposed area of focused practice and include the rationale for how this area of focused practice is different than a subspecialty, in two paragraphs or less:
 3. Focused practice typically falls under one of these areas. Please describe which of the following this application addresses:
 - a. Evolving area of practice
 - b. Area of practice limited in scope or size
 - c. Specialized procedure

 4. Please outline the eligibility criteria required of candidates in the proposed area of focused practice, as it pertains to the following:
 - a. Certification in a specialty or subspecialty by an ABMS Member Board:

i. If diplomates of multiple ABMS Member Boards would be allowed to apply for this area of focused practice, please list those Member Boards:

b. What specialty and/or subspecialty certificate(s) will a diplomate be required to hold in order to be eligible for this area of focused practice?

c. Clinical practice experience (both in terms of time and patient volume) in the area of focused practice, beyond initial training:

d. Additional qualifications (if any):

5. With regard to Board-based assessment for candidates prior to awarding this area of focused practice, which assessment methods would be required? (Check all that apply) Examination Written

Oral/practical

Other (Please specify)

Participation in a registry

Submission and review of case lists

Review of patient charts

Other (please specify)

a. Please describe the rationale behind the method(s) required in the assessment process:

6. Please outline the Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program planned for this area of focused practice:

7. Document the professional and scientific status of this area of focused practice by addressing (a) through (d) below. a. Please describe how the existence of a body of scientific medical knowledge underlying the proposed area of focused practice is in large part distinct from, or more detailed than, that of other areas in which certification or focused practice are offered:

b. Explain how this proposed area of focused practice addresses a distinct and well-defined patient population and care need:

ii. The annual rate of change of such diplomates in the recent past and projected annual rate of change for the near future (along with the source(s) of the data):

iii. The current geographic distribution of this group of diplomates, its projected spread in the next five (5) years, and an explanation of how you arrived at this projection:

d. Please identify the existing national societies that have a principal interest in the area of focused practice:

_____ i. Indicate the existing national societies' size and scope, along with the source(s) of the data:

ii. Indicate the distribution of academic degrees held by their members, along with the source(s) of the data:

iii. Indicate the relationship of the national societies' membership with the proposed focused practice designation:

8. Please describe how the cognitive knowledge, clinical and interpersonal skills, professional attitudes, and practical experience of diplomates in this area of focused practice will be distinct from diplomates in other specialties, subspecialties, and areas of focused practice in terms of: a. Clinical competence:

b. Scope of practice:

c. Body of knowledge and skills:

9. For (a) through (e) below, please project the need for and the effect of the proposed new focused practice on the existing patterns of certification or other areas of focused practice. Please indicate how you arrived at your response.

a. Please indicate whether there is any overlap between this area of focused practice and existing subspecialty certifications or other areas of focused practice.

b. Please outline plans for evaluation of the impact of the proposed area of focused practice on your own programs of specialty and subspecialty certification and any other areas of focused practice:

c. Please outline plans for evaluation of the impact of the proposed area of focused practice on other Member Boards' programs of specialty and subspecialty certification and any other areas of focused practice:

d. The impact of the proposed area of focused practice on practice, both existing and long-term, specifically: i. Access to care (please include your rationale):

ii. Quality and coordination of care (please include your rationale):

iii. Benefits to the public (please include your rationale):

e. Please explain the effects, if known, of the proposed area of focused practice on: i. Immediate costs and their relationship to the probable benefits (please indicate your methodology):

ii. Long-term costs and their relationship to the probable benefits (please indicate your methodology):

f. Please explain the effects if this area of focused practice is not approved:

10. Please indicate how the proposed area of focused practice will be evaluated periodically (e.g., every five years) to assure that the area of focused practice remains viable:

11. Please list key stakeholder groups from which ABMS may wish to solicit commentary on the proposed area of focused practice:

To be completed for areas of focused practice for which formalized training is currently available to meet some of the requirements for clinical experience and patient volume:

12. Please provide the following information for those training programs that have a primary educational effort devoted to the proposed area of focused practice, along with their geographic locations and the source(s) of the data:
 - a. Please list the names of training programs in the proposed area of focused practice:
 - b. Indicate the total number of trainee positions available currently (along with the source(s) of the data):
 - c. Provide the number of trainees completing the training annually (along with the source(s) of the data):
 - d. Organization(s) providing accreditation or oversight for training programs:

13. How much additional clinical experience is required beyond training?

NOTE: When submitting this application, please attach the following items:

- ✓ Copy of proposed application form for the candidates for this area of focused practice
- ✓ A written statement indicating concurrence or specific grounds for objection from each Primary and Conjoint Board having expressed related interests in the same field
- ✓ Written comments on the proposed area of focused practice from at least one (1) public stakeholder group
- ✓ An example of how diplomates will be recognized for this area of focused practice