

ABMS MOC Overview and FAQs

Updated April 2018

All 24 ABMS Member Boards are now displaying whether the physicians they certify are participating in MOC. Although not universally required as part of the credentialing process, ABMS MOC is recognized as a key quality marker by insurers, hospitals, quality organizations, and the federal government.

ABMS MOC DISPLAY			
American Board of	Time Limited Certificates End Dates	Time Limited Certificates Duration	Annual MOC Reverification Date
Allergy and Immunology	12/31	10	
Anesthesiology	12/31	10	
Colon and Rectal Surgery	12/31	10	
Dermatology	12/31	10	
Emergency Medicine	12/31	10	
Family Medicine	12/31	Continuous*	2/15
Internal Medicine	12/31	Continuous*	4/1
Medical Genetics and Genomics	12/31	Continuous*	3/1
Neurological Surgery	12/31	10	
Nuclear Medicine	12/31	10	
Obstetrics and Gynecology	12/31	1,6	
Ophthalmology	12/31	10	
Orthopaedic Surgery	12/31	10	
Otolaryngology	12/31	10	
Pathology	12/31	Continuous*	1/31
Pediatrics	12/31	Continuous*	2/15
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	6/30, 11/30, 12/31	10	
Plastic Surgery	12/31	10	
Preventive Medicine	1/31	10	
Psychiatry and Neurology	12/31	Continuous*	3/1
Radiology	12/31	Continuous*	3/15
Surgery	12/31	10	
Thoracic Surgery	12/31	10	
Urology	2/28	10	

* Starting in 2012, these boards have no end dates to their certifications. Pathology transitioned their certifications in January 2016. Medical Genetics and Genomics transitioned their certification in September 2017. To maintain certification from their specialty board, physicians must successfully complete specialty-specific requirements throughout their ongoing MOC cycles.



Specific questions can be referred to Gina Montino, Business Development Support Manager at 312-436-2687 or gmontino@abms.org.

1. Why is ABMS displaying this information publicly?

The reason for displaying a physician's MOC status is to provide the public and other stakeholders easy access to important information about individual physicians. Sharing this information supports ABMS' overall mission to provide information concerning issues involving the certification of physicians.

2. What does "participating in MOC" mean?

The phrase means that a physician is engaged in the activities required by his or her certifying board(s) for ongoing learning and assessment. The physician's certifying board(s) determines whether or not he or she is in compliance. When the 24 ABMS Member Boards adopted the standards outlined in the ABMS MOC program, they each launched an MOC program that was tailored to the needs of their medical specialty and subspecialties. A physician participating in MOC shows a commitment to lifelong learning and ongoing self-evaluation, and is engaged in measuring and improving his or her practice.

3. Why does the display of MOC on a physician's profile not include effective dates of certification?

ABMS MOC provides physicians a structured approach to improving the effectiveness, safety, and efficiency of their practices through focused assessment, learning, and improvement activities. It is an extension of a physician's general and subspecialty certification(s).

4. How will MOC participation be displayed on a physician's profile?

The "participating in MOC" display will include the status of all a physician's specialty (and subspecialty, if any) certificates. For each specialty and subspecialty certificate listed, either a "Yes", "No" or "Not Required" response will be given as to whether that physician is participating in the MOC program of his or her certifying Member Board for that certificate. The physician's board(s) determines whether or not he or she is in compliance.

At the bottom of each physician's profile, a disclaimer notes that, for some ABMS Member Boards, physicians who were board certified before those Member Boards established their MOC programs may not be required to participate in the ABMS MOC program created by their Member Board(s). The disclaimer links to www.abms.org, which lists the contact information for the 24 Member Boards.

5. What does it mean if a physician is listed as participating in MOC?

A physician listed as participating in MOC indicates the person is engaged in the assessment and learning activities required by his or her certifying Member Board(s) to improve the effectiveness, safety, and efficiency of their practices.

6. What does it mean if a physician is listed as not participating in MOC?

There are a variety of reasons why a physician may be listed as not participating in MOC. He or she may have chosen not to participate in the MOC program of his or her certifying Member Board(s). Or, he or she may be participating in MOC, but is not meeting the requirements. Contact the physician's certifying board(s) for more information about its MOC program.



7. What does it mean if a physician is listed as not required to participate in MOC?

A physician listed as not required to participate MOC indicates that the physician became board certified in his or her specialty before his or her board established its MOC program. According to the policy of that physician's certifying board, he or she is therefore not required to participate in its MOC program.

8. Why is a physician's profile missing the participating in MOC display?

If this information is missing, the physician's certifying Member Board(s) has not made his or her MOC status available to ABMS. Examples of why the information has not been provided to ABMS could include technical issues, delays in confirming the MOC status of a board certified physician, or other factors specific to the physician. ABMS will display publicly whether that physician is participating in MOC as soon as it receives the information from his or her certifying board(s).

9. What is an MOC reverification date?

ABMS Member Boards that have eliminated end dates recognize that some entities may still need a certification end date to complete Primary Source Verification. To assist in this process, we encourage credentialers to utilize an annual reverification date, provided by each Member Board. Please note that physician certification status will only change once a year, unless a certificate is revoked for disciplinary reasons. Therefore, by utilizing the annual reverification date suggested, one will have accurate information about a physician's current certification status.

10. How is the MOC reverification date used?

For credentialers who may need an end date to complete Primary Source Verification, the individual Member Boards provide an annual reverification date to ensure accurate certification status.

11. Who benefits from the adoption of no end dates?

Both physicians and patients benefit. MOC helps ensure better patient care through a physician's participation in an ABMS MOC process which continually assesses and helps enhance professional medical knowledge, judgment, professionalism, clinical techniques, and communication skills. The public will know that a physician who is "participating in MOC" represents the highest level of commitment to patient care and can use that information to help make a personal physician selection.

12. How quickly are ABMS board certification database records updated?

The ABMS certification database is the central repository for information on the specialty physicians who are certified by an ABMS Member Board. It is updated each day with information that is received from the Member Boards and verified by the ABMS database team. The Member Boards provide information to ABMS after a certification exam is given. Physicians also may request an update to be made. In the case of newly certified physicians, the certifying Member Board submits information within two weeks of the public display of information and/or formal notification to the physician. The information received is thoroughly checked for quality and accuracy. Once this process is complete, the data is made accessible through ABMS Solutions products and ABMS Solutions licensees. Data resulting from a physician search is displayed in the ABMS Board Certification Credentials Profile. A similar process occurs for physician MOC participation status information. However, given the varying cycles for when MOC requirements must be completed, Member Boards may submit information to ABMS throughout the year or on an annual basis.



ABMS Board Eligibility Overview and FAQs

Updated April 2018

Specialty Certification

The ABMS Board Eligibility Policy, effective January 1, 2012, limits the period of time that may elapse between a physician's completion of training and achievement of initial certification in a specialty. The Member Boards established transition dates for physician candidates who had completed training, but not yet achieved initial certification in a specialty as of the ABMS Board Eligibility Policy's effective date.

BOARD ELIGIBLE PERIODS AND TRANSITION DATES		
American Board of	Board Eligible Period (+practice requirement)	Transition Date
Allergy and Immunology	5 years	12/31/2017
Anesthesiology	7 years	1/1/2019
Colon and Rectal Surgery ¹	7 years	12/31/2023
Dermatology	5 years	12/31/2016
Emergency Medicine	5 years	12/31/2019
Family Medicine	7 years	1/1/2019
Internal Medicine	7 years	1/1/2019
Medical Genetics and Genomics	7 years	1/1/2019
Neurological Surgery	5 years	12/31/2018
Nuclear Medicine	7 years	*
Obstetrics and Gynecology	7 (+1) years	12/31/2018
Ophthalmology	7 years	1/1/2019
Orthopaedic Surgery ²	5 years	*
Otolaryngology	5 years	1/1/2019
Pathology	5 years	1/1/2019
Pediatrics ³	7 years	*
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	7 years	12/31/2019
Plastic Surgery	7 (+1) years	1/1/2019
Preventive Medicine	7 years	1/1/2019
Psychiatry and Neurology	7 years	1/1/2019
Radiology	6 years	1/1/2015
Surgery	7 years	7/1/2022
Thoracic Surgery	7 years	*
Urology	6 years	*

* These Member Boards had board eligibility policies in place prior to the effective date of the ABMS Policy. They aligned their board eligible periods with the principles of the policy.

¹ Colon and Rectal surgery requires candidates to pass the written examination given by the American Board of Surgery. Candidates have 7 years to complete both written and oral examinations after application approval.

² Orthopaedic Surgery candidates have 5 years to achieve certification after passing the written examination.

³ The board eligible period for Pediatrics is 7 years for those who completed their training in 2007 or later. For those who completed their training prior to 2007, the transition period ended on 12/31/2013.



Subspecialty Certification

The ABMS Eligibility Policy for Subspecialty Certification, effective January 1, 2018, limits the period of time that may elapse between a physician’s training and achievement of initial certification in a subspecialty. ABMS Member Boards that do not have an existing policy in place are expected to establish and implement a transition plan. This period can be up to 7 years following the successful completion of training, plus time (if any) in practice as required by the board for admissibility to the certifying examination.

BOARD ELIGIBLE PERIODS AND TRANSITION DATES		
American Board of	Eligibility Period following completion of training (+practice requirement)	Transition Date
Anesthesiology	7 years	*
Dermatology	5 years	*
Emergency Medicine	7 years	*
Family Medicine	7 years	*
Internal Medicine	7 years	*
Medical Genetics and Genomics	7 years	*
Obstetrics and Gynecology	8 years	January 1, 2020
Orthopaedic Surgery ¹	7 (+2) years	*
Otolaryngology		January 1, 2025
Pathology ²	7 years	*
Pediatrics	7 years	*
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	7 years	*
Plastic Surgery ³	7 (+2) years)	*
Preventive Medicine	7 years	*
Psychiatry and Neurology	7 years	*
Radiology	10 years	January 1, 2025
Surgery ⁴		January 1, 2025
Thoracic Surgery ⁵	7 years	*
Urology ⁶	6 years	*

* These Member Boards had board eligibility policies in place prior to the effective date of the ABMS Policy. They aligned their board eligible periods with the principles of the policy.

¹ Orthopaedic Surgery allows a maximum of 9 years to complete certification in Surgery of the Hand. This policy also applies to Sports Medicine, pending review by the board.

² The Pathology eligibility period starts from the completion of subspecialty training or primary certification, whichever is later.

³ Plastic Surgery allows a maximum of 7 years to complete certification after application, except for Surgery of the Hand which is 9 years.

⁴ Surgery extends the time limit an additional 5 years for subspecialties with a required oral exam.

⁵ Thoracic Surgery requires diplomates to apply within 1 year of completing training.

⁶ Urology allows a maximum of 3 years to complete certification after application.



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1. Where can I view the ABMS Member Boards' Eligibility periods and transition dates?

Please see the charts above. They outline the time limits established by each Member Board.

2. Why was the policy established?

The ABMS Board Eligibility Policy and the ABMS Eligibility Policy for Subspecialty Certification recognize physicians' need to use the term "board eligible" as a way to signal their preparations for certification. At the same time, it closes off the potential for abuse through use of the term indefinitely. The establishment of this policy tightens the connection between training and certification. Research has shown repeatedly that physicians lose knowledge and skills as the years pass after their training. The requirements of the ABMS MOC program address this problem through continuous professional development. The policies limit the time that can elapse before physicians are certified and therefore participating in MOC.

3. Why is ABMS creating this range rather than one all-purpose limit?

The Member Boards have different requirements for certification and different schedules for certifying exams. The flexibility in the time frame recognizes this simple fact.

4. Will there be any exceptions to the new limits?

The ABMS Member Boards may grant exceptions in instances of military deployment, acute illness, or other special circumstances.