

UNITED COUNCIL
FOR
NEUROLOGIC
SUBSPECIALTIES

UCNS Certification in Headache Medicine
Eligibility Criteria and Information for Applicants

Application Deadline: April 2, 2018

Late Application Deadline: April 16, 2018

Contents

[Eligibility Criteria](#)

[Application for Certification and Examination Process](#)

[Payment and Fees](#)

[Applicants With Disabilities and Qualifications for Testing Accommodations](#)

[Policies](#)

[Contact](#)

Eligibility Criteria

General Eligibility Criteria

1. Applicants must be a diplomate in good standing of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) or possess equivalent certification by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC). Candidates who have qualified for examination by the ABMS or the RCPSC, but have not yet been certified, may sit for the Headache Medicine (HM) examination but may not receive notification of the results until the criterion in I.A.1 has been satisfied. Candidates must sit for the ABMS or RCPSC examination in the same year as the HM examination.
2. Applicants must hold a current, active, valid, unrestricted, and unqualified license to practice medicine in at least one jurisdiction in the United States, its territories, or Canada, and in each jurisdiction in which they practice.

A license to practice medicine is not “current, active, valid, unrestricted and unqualified” if, in any manner to any extent whatsoever, one or more of the following applies. The license is:

- a. under probation;
- b. conditioned, i.e., the physician is required to practice under supervision or with modification, or to obtain continuing education;
- c. limited, e.g., to specific practice settings;
- d. institutional, temporary, or educational; or
- e. inactive as a result of an action taken by or a request made by a medical licensing board.

Policy on Medical Licensure

If any license currently held by an applicant participating in the application process is restricted or qualified in any way, full details must be provided to the UCNS. The UCNS may, at its sole discretion, determine whether to investigate the license and the information provided. The UCNS reserves the right to determine if the license fulfills this policy.

Licenses that have been revoked, suspended, surrendered, or not renewed in order to terminate or settle disciplinary proceedings do not qualify as meeting the requirements for medical licensure, and all such licenses must be reported for review and consideration. The UCNS will determine if the situation is cause to deny an applicant’s certification application, deny a candidate access to an examination, or revoke a diplomate’s certificate.

Application Pathways

Applicants must have completed **one** of the following eligibility pathways:

1. UCNS-Accredited Fellowship
2. Practice Track
3. Recertification

UCNS-Accredited Fellowship

Applicants must have successfully completed a [UCNS-accredited fellowship](#) in HM. The fellowship must be 12 or more months in length. The applicant must satisfactorily complete the fellowship training by the date of the application. The applicant must apply within 48 months of completing the fellowship. Verification by the appropriate fellowship program director must be provided.

Applicants currently in a fellowship that will not be completed prior to the application deadline may still apply. **The applicant must have successfully completed the fellowship training a minimum of 25 days prior to the examination week. Confirmation from the fellowship program director stating that the applicant has successfully completed the UCNS accredited fellowship program must be received within 20 days of the fellowship program completion date.**

Practice Track

The practice track pathway initially closed after the 2014 HM examination; however, the UCNS Board of Directors has approved practice track pathway examinations for the 2018 and 2020 initial certification examinations. To apply via this pathway, applicants must have fulfilled the requirements of the pathway by the deadline date for the 2020 examination. The practice track applicant must submit the following documentation for **one of the three** following areas in HM:

1. Satisfactory completion of 12 months of formal training (non-accredited) in HM that has taken place after the completion of formal residency training. Training or exposure to HM given to residents as part of their standard residency curriculum will not count toward the 12 months of training. The applicant must provide documentation from the appropriate program director at each institution where training occurred.
2. At least 50 hours of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* specifically related to HM that were earned over the 60 months prior to the application deadline. **Specification of programs attended and relevance to the field of HM must be provided.**
3. An active, full-time academic appointment in which teaching responsibilities include instructing one or more of the following in HM: medical students, residents, and/or fellows. A letter from the applicant's department chair must accompany the application.

In addition to 1, 2, or 3 above, the application must also contain documentation of a 36-month period of time in which the applicant has spent a minimum of 25% of her/his time in the practice of HM which has occurred after the completion of a formal residency training program. The practice must:

- i. Include direct diagnosis and management of HM cases.
- ii. Have occurred in the United States, its territories, or Canada.
- iii. Have occurred in the 60 months immediately preceding the application deadline but need not be continuous.

The application must contain letters from **two** physicians who are familiar with the applicant's practice pattern during the practice time submitted in the application. The letters together must address an entire 36-month period of time.

*If the applicant has completed unaccredited subspecialty training, this may count towards the required 36 months of practice time. For example, if an applicant completed 12 months of unaccredited training in HM, the UCNS will count those 12 months towards the required 36 months of practice time. Documentation of an additional 24 months of practice time would then be required.

Recertification

Recertification applicants are required to submit evidence of 300 hours of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*, 20% (60) of which are specific to HM, that were earned during their certification cycle. Diplomates certified prior to the January 1, 2011, effective date of the policy on maintaining certification have prorated CME requirements. A [phase-in timetable](#) for those diplomates certified prior to January 1, 2011, can be found on the HM certification page of the UCNS website.

Recertification applicants will sit for the UCNS recertification examination offered closest to the expiration date of his or her current UCNS certification. If no recertification examination in the diplomate's subspecialty is offered in the year when his or her certificate expires, he or she shall take the examination offered in the prior year.

Application for Certification and Examination Process

Application

UCNS uses an online application system. All applications must be completed online, and all supporting documentation must be uploaded through the online application system where requested. Application sections must be completed sequentially, and some application sections require you to upload documentation before proceeding to the next section. UCNS provides template letters that must be used for the necessary application attachments. The template letters are available during the application cycle or upon request. Paper applications are no longer available.

A personal logon is required to access the application. You must request your personal logon information no later than 4:00 pm Central time on the application deadline date in order to apply for the examination. You are encouraged to work on your application prior to 4:00 pm Central time on the application deadline date as technical support will not be available and logon requests will not be granted after 4:00 pm Central.

In order to have your application processed, you must finalize your completed application by the application deadline date. Any application that is not finalized by this time will not be accepted. In addition to a finalized application, UCNS must receive the examination fee postmarked on or before the application deadline date if paying by check or money order. Check or money order payments are the only application items that may be mailed to the UCNS office.

Reexamination

Candidates who fail the initial examination under the accredited fellowship or practice track pathway may repeat the examination up to two additional times; however, no candidate may take the examination more than three times. Application for reexamination must occur within six years of when the examination was first administered to the candidate. Applicants who have taken the exam in a previous year, but were not successful, and wish to reapply must submit a new application, provide current supporting documentation, and pay the current reexamination fee. Documentation submitted with a previous application will not be accepted.

General Information and Timeline

1. Applicant submits a completed application and supporting documents and payment by **April 2, 2018**. Late applications will be accepted until April 16, 2018, and subject to a \$500 late fee.
2. UCNS will review the application for completeness and contact you with questions, if any.
3. UCNS will send notice of approval or non-approval to sit for the examination only after the Certification Council has reviewed all applications.
4. If approved to sit for the examination, UCNS will provide information on scheduling your exam with Pearson VUE, admission to test locations, and preparing for a computer-based examination.
5. Applicant sits for the examination on **October 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12, 2018**.
6. **Results will be mailed approximately ten weeks following the examination.** In the interest of maintaining confidentiality, examination results are not given by telephone, facsimile transmission, or email. Please notify UCNS immediately of any address changes.

Examination Format

The HM certification and recertification examinations are computer-based and scheduled for four hours. Initial certification examinations contain 200 multiple-choice questions. Recertification examinations contain 150 clinically based multiple-choice questions.

Payment and Fees

For the 2018 HM examination, a completed application, supporting documentation, and all appropriate fees must be submitted to UCNS no later than **April 2, 2018**. Applications for certification will still be accepted until April 16, 2018; however, a late fee of \$500 will be applied. Applications received after April 16 will not be accepted.

UCNS accepts personal checks, cashier's checks, money orders, Visa, MasterCard, and American Express for payment. All fees must be submitted in US currency. For the examination, a completed application, supporting documentation and all appropriate fees must be received in the UCNS office by the application deadline. Applications received after the late application deadline will not be accepted. Applications submitted without the appropriate fees will not be processed or submitted for review. Fees received without applications will be returned. The UCNS reserves the right to revise the fee schedule at any time.

Fee Schedule

Initial Examination	April 2 Deadline	April 16 Deadline
Application fee (non-refundable)	\$680	\$680
Examination fee	\$1020	\$1020
Late fee	\$0	\$500
Total initial examination fee	\$1700	\$2200
Reexamination		
Examination fee	\$1020	\$1020
Late fee	\$0	\$500
Total reexamination fee	\$1020	\$1520
Recertification Examination		
Application fee (non-refundable)	\$600	\$600
Examination fee	\$900	\$900
Late fee	\$0	\$500
Total recertification fee	\$1500	\$2000
Recertification Reexamination		
Examination fee	\$900	\$900
Late fee	\$0	\$500
Total recertification reexamination fee	\$900	\$1400

Applicants with Disabilities and Qualifications for Testing Accommodations

General Information

The UCNS recognizes that physicians with disabilities may wish to take the certifying examinations and will attempt to make accommodations for applicants with verified disabilities. The Board supports the intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and will provide reasonable accommodations during testing to provide equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. Applicants are reminded, however, that “auxiliary aids (and services) can only be offered if they do not fundamentally alter the measurement of skills or knowledge the examination is intended to test” Americans with Disabilities Act, Public Law 101-336 & 309 [b][3]). To this extent, the UCNS will provide reasonable accommodations during testing to provide equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. Documentation requesting reasonable accommodations must identify the disability and provide a rationale for specified modifications to standard testing procedures.

Applicants who request accommodations because of a disability must do so at the time of application. The application and documentation substantiating the disability must be included with the examination application, and be submitted no later than the application deadline.

If UCNS deems it necessary, an independent assessment may be requested at UCNS’s expense. Documentation and other evidence substantiating the disability include, but are not limited to, each of the following:

- A report diagnosing the applicant’s disability written by a professional appropriately qualified to evaluate the disability. The report must be printed on the certified examiner’s letterhead, with the examiner’s credentials, address, and telephone number given in the letterhead or title. The report must include the candidate’s name, date of birth, date of testing, and it must be signed by the examiner.
- A history of the disability, including previous settings in which accommodations have been granted. Having had prior accommodations granted does not necessarily influence the decision of the UCNS to grant or deny a current request for accommodation. If there is no history of prior accommodations, the examiner must explain why current circumstances necessitate accommodations.
- Diagnostic information about the specified disability using standard nomenclature from sources such as the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and the APA Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (DSM-IV).
- Specific recommended accommodations with a rationale for why each accommodation is needed. A description of any functional limitations associated with the disability is important to the UCNS’s evaluation of the request.

The UCNS does not discriminate among applicants on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or marital status.

Review of Documentation

Each report is reviewed carefully before accommodations are provided. If the UCNS does not find appropriate and sufficient evidence to grant accommodations, the applicant will be informed that the request has been denied. If a request has been denied, a written appeal may be submitted to UCNS.

Policies

Withdrawals and Refunds

Applicants withdrawing from the examination may be eligible for a refund of their examination fee. Applicants must notify the UCNS Executive Director in writing of her/his decision to withdraw from the examination no less than three months prior to the first day of the examination week. **Application fees are non-refundable.** Refunds will be issued in the same method in which the original payment was received.

Certification and Recertification

UCNS subspecialty certification is a voluntary process by which the UCNS grants recognition to a physician subspecialist who has met predetermined qualifications specified by the UCNS and who successfully passes a proctored examination in the subspecialty. Subspecialty certification and the certificate recognize those physician subspecialists who have successfully completed the UCNS's requirements and demonstrated their skills and abilities at the time of evaluation. Certification is not a guarantee of the competence of the physician subspecialist.

Certificates issued in a UCNS subspecialty are ten-year, time-limited certificates. All UCNS time-limited certificates, regardless of their exact dates of issuance, are considered to expire on December 31 following the tenth anniversary of the date of issuance. **Diplomates with certificates in all UCNS subspecialties must also maintain certification in their primary specialty. If certification in the primary specialty lapses, certification in the subspecialty is no longer valid.**

Diplomates who are not recertified before their certificates expire are no longer UCNS-certified in that area of certification. Once a former diplomate completes the maintenance of certification process, however, he or she will regain certification status. Diplomates must also maintain certification in their primary specialty in order to apply for recertification.

Revocation of Certificates

The UCNS has the authority to revoke any certificate issued by it for cause or to place a certificate holder on probation for a fixed or indefinite period of time. If a certificate is revoked, a written appeal may be submitted.

Irregular Behavior Including Unethical Behavior of Candidates

The UCNS believes that the ethics of candidates for certification are of concern. The following rules apply:

- a. Falsification of credentials will be cause for the UCNS refusal to admit a candidate to examination for up to five years.
- b. The UCNS will consider legal action against anyone who forges a UCNS certificate, copies a UCNS examination, or otherwise uses them in conflict with copyright laws or in any other way violates the legal prerogatives of the UCNS. Such activities will cause for the UCNS's refusal to admit a candidate to examination for up to five years.
- c. Scores on examinations may be invalidated for reasons of irregular behavior. Statistical analyses may be used to confirm suspected cheating. If an examination score is invalidated, the candidate may submit a written appeal within 30 days of the notice of invalidation. If an examination score is invalidated because of irregular behavior, the UCNS will not consider the candidate for examination for a period of up to five years, depending on the irregular behavior.

Irregular Behavior Including Unethical Behavior of Candidates (continued)

- d. Irregular behavior shall include, but not be limited to, the following conduct:
- Copying answers from another candidate's examination.
 - Knowingly permitting another candidate to copy one's answers on an examination.
 - Unauthorized possession, reproduction, or disclosure of examination materials or content at any time.
 - Offering any financial benefit or other benefit to any director, officer, employee, proctor, diplomate, or other agent or representative of the UCNS in return for any right, privilege, or benefit that is not granted by the UCNS to other similarly situated candidates or persons.
 - Not complying with proctors' instructions.
 - Disregarding time limits.
 - Bringing food, drink, cellular phones, pagers, books, study materials, personal belongings, or other prohibited material into an examination.
 - Making telephone calls during an examination.
 - Any other form of disruptive behavior, including repeated or excessive verbal complaints.
- e. Notification of the UCNS action may be sent to legitimately interested third parties, including the American Medical Association, state medical societies, medical licensing boards, and appropriate specialty societies.

Appeal of Decisions

An appeal process is available to individuals who disagree with the UCNS's decisions regarding their admissibility to the examination, request for special accommodations, accuracy of scoring procedure, or revocation of certification.

The full list of UCNS [Certification Policies](#) can be viewed on the [UCNS website](#).

Contact

For more information regarding UCNS certification, please contact:

Todd Bulson
Senior Manager, Certification
United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties
201 Chicago Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55415
Telephone: 612-928-6067
Fax: 612-454-2750
Email: tbulson@ucns.org

Becky Swanson
Executive Assistant
United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties
201 Chicago Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55415
Telephone: 612-928-6050
Fax: 612-454-2750
Email: bswanson@ucns.org