Guide to the UCNS Process
OVERVIEW

This information is intended as a guide to facilitate the understanding of the United Council for Neurological Subspecialties (UCNS) processes. The role of the UCNS is to work with developing subspecialties. The UCNS works with groups that are at an early stage in the subspecialty development process. This guide will provide you with information regarding the pathways for subspecialty accreditation and certification as well as more detail regarding the UCNS.
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I. SUBSPECIALTY ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION

Trends across all medical specialties have been toward subspecialization, driven, in part by new science and technology. A subspecialty must first decide if subspecialty accreditation and certification is appropriate for the discipline. A subspecialty must be able to identify its core content and its unique body of knowledge. The boundaries of the subspecialty and the potential areas of overlap with other current or potential subspecialties should be identified.

II. PATHWAYS FOR ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION

Once a subspecialty agrees that subspecialty accreditation and certification is appropriate, it must determine which pathway should be chosen to achieve accreditation and certification.

A. Accreditation Pathways

Accreditation involves recognizing and setting standards for training programs. There are two pathways to achieve accreditation of neurological fellowship training programs.

1. UCNS
   Information regarding accreditation via the UCNS can be found on the UCNS Website at www.ucns.org.

2. ACGME/NRRC
   Information regarding accreditation via the ACGME can be found on the ACGME Website at www.acgme.org.

B. Certification Pathways

Certification involves setting standards for the knowledge base of a subspecialty and recognizing competence in this knowledge base by examination of physicians. There are two pathways to achieve subspecialty certification of physicians.

1. UCNS
   Information regarding certification via the UCNS can be found on the UCNS Website at www.ucns.org.

2. ABMS/ABPN
   Information regarding certification via the ABPN can be found on the ABPN Website at www.abpn.com.
III. UCNS PROCESS

If a subspecialty determines to pursue subspecialty accreditation and certification via the UCNS, it must first achieve membership with the UCNS.

A. Membership

Subspecialty membership in the UCNS requires sponsorship by a national organization, among other requirements. The UCNS offers membership in two categories: Independent Board (IB) and Neurological Subspecialty Area (NSA). IBs are certifying boards that provide subspecialty accreditation or certification options to neurologists. NSAs are clinical subspecialty areas of neurology.

1. IB

IB membership criteria and membership applications can be found on the UCNS Website at www.ucns.org.

2. NSA

NSA membership criteria and membership applications can be found on the UCNS Website at www.ucns.org.

3. Membership Application Resources

The Guide for Development of Subspecialty Foundational Documents can be found on the UCNS Website at www.ucns.org. The Guide will facilitate the development of a subspecialty’s core curriculum and program requirements.

An application cover letter (Appendix A) and training program template (Appendix B) have been developed to facilitate the submission of the subspecialty membership application.

B. Accreditation

Upon approval of a subspecialty membership in the UCNS, the Accreditation Council works with the member subspecialty and programs to finalize the program requirements. Training programs may then begin to apply for accreditation via the UCNS.

1. Accreditation Resources

The Accreditation Council Policies and Procedures can be found on the UCNS Website at www.ucns.org.
C. Certification

Upon approval of an NSA subspecialty membership in the UCNS and accreditation of training programs, the Certification Council appoints an Examination Committee made up of experts in the subspecialty and develops a subspecialty certification examination. Candidates may then sit for the examination to be certified in the subspecialty.

Upon approval of an IB subspecialty membership in the UCNS and accreditation of training programs, the Certification Council will work with the IB to ensure that the IB meets the UCNS Examination Standards.

1. Certification Resources

The Examination Standards can be found on the UCNS Website at www.ucns.org.

D. Common Questions

Meetings and discussions with various subspecialties have led to the following brief compilation of common questions.

1. What differentiates the UCNS from the ABMS and the ACGME?
The UCNS was developed to assist subspecialties that are too small in size to access the ABMS/ABPN system. The ABMS/ABPN system for certification includes many specialties and subspecialties. The UCNS focuses only on neuroscience. The UCNS has a unique collaboration in that it is sponsored by the five major teaching organizations in neurology. Although the UCNS accreditation process and certification process are separate, the UCNS system is unique to have both processes under one umbrella. The UCNS role is related to the educational aspect and is not political.

2. How does the UCNS define concurrent training?
The basic training a physician receives in his/her specialty and residency shall not overlap with subspecialty training. However, the UCNS has acknowledged that if two subspecialties have defined time available, concurrent training would be acceptable.

3. What is a practice track?
A practice track is a process that allows physicians who initiated the subspecialty prior to the availability of accredited training programs to qualify for the examination by meeting a defined series of criteria. If the practice track is offered, this practice track shall terminate not more that five (5) years after the first certifying exam is offered by the UCNS.
4. **Will I have to take an examination?**
   In order to receive certification via the UCNS, a candidate must sit for and pass the UCNS subspecialty certification examination.

5. **Do I need to be certified in my primary specialty to take the UCNS subspecialty examination?**
   Candidates for the UCNS certification must certified by the ABPN, another appropriate member board of the ABMS, or the Royal College of Physician and Surgeons of Canada. Candidates who have qualified for examination by these organizations but have not been certified, may sit for a subspecialty certification examination approved by the UCNS but may not receive notice of the results of that examination until the above criterion has been satisfied.

6. **What are the fees?**
   The subspecialty membership application fee to the UCNS is $250. Once a subspecialty is approved for membership, there is a $100 annual renewal fee.

   Accreditation fees consist of $2000 for a new program and $1000 for annual renewal.

   The fee for certification is $1200. If subspecialty membership is via an IB, there is a $100 fee per certificate.

   The fees are subject to change.

**E. Acronyms**

1. **ABMS**
   American Board of Medical Specialties – The parent organization of 24 medical specialty boards including the ABPN, one of the sponsoring organizations of the ACGME.

2. **ABPN**
   American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology – It is an ABMS-affiliated Board. It oversees the voluntary board certification process of physicians for Neurology, Child Neurology, Clinical Neurophysiology, Pain Management and other Neurology-related subspecialties. The ABPN is part of the ABMS.

3. **ACGME**
   Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education – Establishes national standards for graduate medical education by which it approves and continually assesses educational programs under its aegis. This is accomplished through specialty Residency Review Committees (RRCs).
It is composed of 26 RRCs representing different subspecialties including the Neurology RRC.

4. **NRRC**  
Neurology Residency Review Council. One of 26 accrediting organizations of the ACGME. It is sponsored by the AAN, ABPN, and the AMA Council on Medical Education. It accredits neurology residency programs and subspecialty neurological programs.

5. **UCNS**  
United Council of Neurological Subspecialties – The UCNS is a non-profit professional medical organization sponsored by five parent organizations: American Academy of Neurology, American Neurological Association, Association of University Professors of Neurology, Child Neurology Society, and Professors of Child Neurology. Its primary mission is to provide for accreditation and certification with the goal of enhancing the quality of training for physicians in neurological subspecialties and the quality of patient care.

F. **Appendices**

1. **Appendix A – Sample Application Cover Letter**

2. **Appendix B – Template for Listing Training Programs**
Appendix A

Date

Stephen M. Sergay, MD
United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties
1080 Montreal Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55033

Dear Dr. Sergay,

On behalf of the (sponsoring organization), enclosed you will find the application for membership with the United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties (UCNS) in the neurological subspecialty area of (neurological subspecialty). The (sponsoring organization) is the national organizational sponsor of (neurological subspecialty).

(informational paragraph--provide information re the mission of the sponsoring organization, date established, membership, etc.)

The (sponsoring organization) recognizes (neurological subspecialty) and endorses the (neurological subspecialty) training requirements. (other information regarding the neurological subspecialty as deemed necessary)

(closing paragraph--include contact information)

Sincerely,

(appropriate sponsoring organization representative)

Enc: UCNS Membership Application

cc: Mary E. Post, UCNS Executive Director
    (appropriate sponsoring organization staff)
## UCNS Membership Application
### Training Programs Template

Name of Applicant/Subspecialty: ____________________________

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<tr>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Sponsoring Institution</th>
<th>Date Estb</th>
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