

UNITED COUNCIL
FOR
NEUROLOGIC
SUBSPECIALTIES

**Information for Applicants for
Certification in
Neuroimaging**

2009 Examination

Last Revised: 5/1/08

Important Dates

2008

May

Applications available on UCNS Website at
<http://www.ucns.org/go/subspecialty/neuroimaging/certification>.

August 15

Deadline for completed application and payment to be received by UCNS Executive Office

October

UCNS provides admissibility decisions

November

Pearson VUE provides information necessary to select a Pearson Professional Center

2009

February

2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

Examination is administered at Pearson Professional Centers nationwide

April

Examination results and certificates mailed

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION FOR ALL APPLICANTS

A. Definition of Neuroimaging

Neuroimaging (NI) is the subspecialty of Neurology dedicated to the study of the structure of the nervous system with techniques that provide an anatomical rendition, both static and dynamic, of the nervous system and related structures. Because diseases of the nervous system alter its structure and function, NI contributes substantially to the diagnosis, monitoring, and treatment of neurological diseases. NI techniques currently employed include mainly computed tomography, nuclear magnetic resonance (MRI, MRS, MRA, fMRI), positron emission tomography, single photon emission computed tomography, and catheter angiography. As a subspecialty of Neurology, NI focuses primarily on the integration of clinical information with information provided by NI techniques. NI includes the selection of the appropriate technology to image the relevant structure or function of the nervous system and the correlation of the imaging findings with the rest of the clinical data. Emphasis is placed on the correlation of the clinical data with information derived from the various methods used to image and evaluate the nervous system and related structures (*integrated NI*) and on the updating of algorithms leading to a cost effective and efficient use of imaging modalities for the diagnosis and treatment of the different disorders of the nervous system.

B. History of Certification in Neuroimaging

The NI subspecialty achieved membership status with the UCNS in July 2006. The membership application was sponsored by the American Society of Neuroimaging. Membership is the first step in the UCNS process. The UCNS NI Examination Committee, made up of experts in the field of NI and nominated by the subspecialty's sponsoring organization, developed the exam throughout 2006 and 2007. The first examination was offered February 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8, 2008.

C. Regulations

In carrying out its specified functions, the UCNS Board has regulations to guide its activities and to communicate to applicants and other interested persons its policies regarding program requirements, examinations, fees, etc.

These regulations are amended from time to time. The statements contained in this publication are the most recent amendments and represent the policies of the UCNS Board as of the date of this publication.

The UCNS Board has authority to periodically issue and thereafter to amend the regulations relating to the issuance and revocation of certificates of recognized subspecialties.

D. Certification and Maintenance of Certification

Subspecialty certification in Neuroimaging is awarded to all candidates who meet the necessary requirements and who successfully pass a proctored examination in the subspecialty.

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. 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 the subspecialty of Neuroimaging 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 the subspecialty of Neuroimaging 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 with certificates in the subspecialty of Neuroimaging must also maintain certification in their primary specialty in order to apply for recertification in the area of subspecialization. There is no time limit on regaining certification status through maintenance of certification.

E. 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 in accordance with the UCNS Certification Appeals Policies and Procedures (<http://www.ucns.org/certification/>).

F. 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. (See UCNS Certification Appeals Policies and Procedures (<http://www.ucns.org/certification/>)). 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. A new application, current application, and examination fees will be required.
- 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.

II. REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION TO EXAMINATION IN NEUROIMAGING

The following are eligibility criteria for certification in the subspecialty of Neuroimaging (NI). There are general requirements that must be fulfilled as well as requirements for specific pathways of application.

A. GENERAL

General eligibility criteria:

1. Applicants must be a Diplomate in neurology or child neurology in good standing of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology or have equivalent certification by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

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.

3. Current Licenses

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, e.g., 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;
- 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.

Diplomates must continuously fulfill the Policy on Medical Licensure. Failure to do so will result in loss of certification.

B. PATHWAYS

Applicants must have completed **one of two** eligibility pathways. The pathways are:

1. Fellowship
2. Practice Track

1. Fellowship

An applicant must have successfully completed a fellowship in NI that is **accredited by the UCNS**. The fellowship must be 12 or more months in length. **The applicant must have successfully completed the fellowship training with 45 days of the examination week. Confirmation from the fellowship program director stating applicant has successfully completed the UCNS accredited fellowship program must be received within 30 days of the fellowship program completion date.** The applicant must apply within 36 months of completing the fellowship.

Verification by the appropriate fellowship program director must be provided.

2. Practice Track

The 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 set of criteria.

The applicant must submit the following documentation for **one of the three** following areas NI:

a. Satisfactory completion of 12 months of formal training (non-accredited) in NI focused on MRI that has taken place after the completion of residency training in neurology or child neurology. Training or exposure to NI given to neurology or child neurology residents as part of their neurology or child neurology curriculum will not count toward the 12 months of training. The applicant must provide documentation from the appropriate program director at each institution where the training occurred.

OR

b. At least 50 hours of Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education approved category 1 CME specifically related to NI or Neuroradiology focused on MRI

over the 60 months prior to application. Specification of programs attended and relevance to the field of NI or Neuroradiology focused on MRI must be provided.

OR

c. A letter from the applicant's current department chair that states he/she has an active, full-time academic appointment in which his/her teaching responsibilities include instructing one or more of the following in NI: medical students, residents, or fellows.

AND (in addition to one of a, b, or c above)

d. Documentation of completion of **one of the two** following practical expertise requirements in NI:

i. Valid certificate in MRI/CT from the American Society of Neuroimaging.

OR

ii. Documentation of supervised or independent written interpretation of at least 650 neuroimaging cases, at least 500 of which must be in MRI of the brain or spine. Documentation must be from all appropriate CME programs, mentors, medical directors, or program directors.

AND (in addition to d above)

e. Documentation of a 36-month* period of time in which the applicant has spent a minimum of 25% of his/her time in the practice of NI. The practice must:

- i. Include diagnostic MRI NI evaluations in conjunction with direct diagnosis and management of neurological cases in which MRI is employed as a key component of the diagnostic workup.
- ii. Have occurred in the United States, its territories, or in Canada, or at hospitals accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.
- iii. Have occurred in the 60-month interval immediately preceding application for certification but need not be continuous.

The application must contain letters from two physicians familiar with the applicant's practice pattern during the practice time submitted in the application. If the applicant is in an academic or hospital setting, then a letter from the appropriate department chair or chief of staff will be required as one of the two letters. The letters must together address an entire 36-month period of time submitted.

* If the applicant has completed unaccredited training, this may count towards the 36-month period of time. For example, if the applicant completed 12 months of unaccredited training in NI, the UCNS will count these 12 months towards the 36-month period of time. Documentation of an additional 24-month period of time would then be required.

This practice track pathway of application will close on the last day of the application cycle for the 2013 NI examination. To apply via this pathway, physicians must have fulfilled the requirements of the pathway on or before that date. Extensions for acceptance to this pathway must be submitted in writing before the close on the last day of the application cycle for the 2013 NI examination.

Certification obtained under the practice track pathway will have the same time-limitation as certification obtained via an accredited fellowship pathway.

III. APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION IN NEUROIMAGING

A. Deadlines and Fees

For the 2009 subspecialty examination, a completed application, supporting documentation and all appropriate fees must be received in the UCNS Executive Office by **August 15, 2008**. Applications received after August 15 will not be accepted and will be returned.

Applications submitted without the appropriate fees will not be processed. Fees received without applications will be returned. **The application fee is not refundable. All fees are nontransferable.**

Fee Schedule*

(Effective for examinations beginning in 2009)

Application fee	\$600
Examination fee	\$900
Total certification fee	\$1500
Reexamination fee	\$900
Duplicate certificate fee	\$150
Returned check charge	\$50

* *All fees must be submitted in U.S. currency.*

The UCNS reserves the right to revise fee schedules at any time.

B. Withdrawals and Refund Policy

The application fee will not be refunded. Policies are located at:
(<http://www.ucns.org/go/subspecialty/neuroimaging/certification>)

C. Certification Application

Instructions and application details are located on the Neuroimaging Certification Application on the UCNS Website at:
(<http://www.ucns.org/go/subspecialty/neuroimaging/certification>).

D. Certification Application Appendix

The Certification Application Appendix includes sample form letters that may be used for the necessary application attachments. The Certification Application Appendix is located on the UCNS Website at:
(<http://www.ucns.org/go/subspecialty/neuroimaging/certification>)

IV. EXAMINATION PROCESS FOR NEUROIMAGING

A. General Information

1. Submit completed application and payment by August 15, 2008.
2. UCNS will send confirmation of receipt of application, necessary attachments, and payment.
3. UCNS will send notice of approval or nonapproval to sit for examination.
4. If approved for the examination, the UCNS will provide information on:
 - a. scheduling at test locations via Pearson VUE; (*The UCNS uses Pearson VUE testing centers for the administration of the examination.*)
 - b. admission to test locations; and
 - c. preparing for a computer-based examination.
5. Candidates must contact Pearson VUE for scheduling.
- 6. Sit for examination on February 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6, 2009.**
7. Results will be mailed approximately ten weeks following examination. In the interest of maintaining confidentiality, examination results are not given by telephone, facsimile transmission, or e-mail.

B. Examination Format

The UCNS examination format is:

- Computer-based
- 200 question multiple-choice
- 5 hours

V. APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS FOR TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

A. 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 should download the Testing Accommodations Application from the UCNS Website (<http://www.ucns.org/certification/applications/>). The application and documentation substantiating the disability must be submitted to the UCNS no later than the deadline for submitting applications (August 15, 2008) for examination.

If the UCNS deems it necessary, an independent assessment may be requested at the expense of the UCNS. Documentation and other evidence substantiating the disability includes, but is 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.

B. 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 in accordance with the UCNS Certification Appeals Policies and Procedures (<http://www.ucns.org/certification/>).

C. Testing Accommodations

Testing accommodations may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Assistance in completing answers
- Extended testing time
- Large screen font
- Large print examination
- Separate examination room
- Reader
- Use of assistive devices

VI. 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 UCNS Certification Appeals Policies and Procedures can be found on the UCNS Website at (<http://www.ucns.org/certification/>).

VII. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties (UCNS)? When and why was it created?

The United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties (UCNS) was incorporated in March 2003 as 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.

Where is the UCNS located?

The UCNS Executive Office is located in St. Paul, MN.

Who Serves on the UCNS Board of Directors?

The UCNS Board of Directors is made up of nine voting directors and six non-voting ex officio members. Five of the voting directors are nominated by the Parent Organizations and include the three officers. Four of the voting directors are nominated by the subspecialties that have achieved UCNS membership. The six non-voting ex officio members include the Parent Organizations' Executive Directors, a representative from the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, and a representative from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education Neurology Residency Review Committee.

What Certificates does the UCNS Offer?

The Board currently offers certificates in the subspecialties of Behavioral Neurology & Neuropsychiatry, Headache Medicine, Neurocritical Care, and Neuroimaging. Certificates will be offered in Clinical Neuromuscular Pathology and Neuro-Oncology.

What are the requirements for certification in Neuroimaging?

The Neuroimaging certification requirements for physicians can be found on the UCNS Website at (<http://www.ucns.org/certification/requirements/>).

What are the Program Requirements for Neuroimaging?

The Neuroimaging Program Requirements for training programs can be found on the UCNS website at (<http://www.ucns.org/accreditation/requirements>).

Does certification expire?

Yes. Individuals achieving UCNS certification are issued ten-year, time-limited certificates.

How does a candidate apply to sit for the examination in Neuroimaging?

Examinations are administered once a year. Candidates who wish to sit for the examination must complete and sign an application on the official application form which may be found on the UCNS Website at

<http://www.ucns.org/go/subspecialty/neuroimaging/certification>). In addition, the Information for Applicants for Certification in Neuroimaging booklet is available on the UCNS Website at <http://www.ucns.org/go/subspecialty/neuroimaging/certification>.

The deadline for receipt of applications for the 2009 examination is August 15, 2008. Applications should be submitted as early as possible and are reviewed in the order they are received. Once the application and payment are received by the UCNS, a confirmation of receipt will be sent to the e-mail address indicated on the application.

What is the application and examination fee?

The application and examination fee is \$1500.

What content is covered on the examination in Neuroimaging?

The Content Outline covered on the examination can be found on the UCNS Website at <http://www.ucns.org/globals/axon/assets/3654.pdf>.

How many times may a candidate apply for the certification examination in Neuroimaging?

Candidates are allowed to re-take the examination up to two consecutive times and not re-apply. Candidates who are eligible to re-take the examination would be required to pay a fee.

To whom should other questions be addressed?

Fellows should refer questions about individual fellowship programs to their fellowship program directors.

For more information about certification, contact:

Todd Bulson

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