

# BACB Newsletter



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## 2027 BCBA Pathway 2 Coursework and Degree Update

Beginning in 2024, the BACB has observed a concerning trend among a handful of individuals applying for BCBA certification through Pathway 2. As a reminder, individuals applying for BCBA certification via Pathway 2 must have a master's degree or higher *and* have completed behavior-analytic coursework that meets the current coursework requirements (in addition to completing supervised fieldwork). Some individuals applying for BCBA certification via Pathway 2 submitted a master's degree that they completed in less than one year, and in some cases, considerably less than one year. For example, 12 applicants from one university completed their full master's degree in a *single* academic quarter. At another university, 47 students completed their full master's degree in three months or less, including a few who finished their degree in just over *one month*. Most of these degrees were earned through self-paced "competency-based" education models—a model that is becoming increasingly popular in US-accredited universities. During the same time frame, a handful of individuals from another university completed all of their behavior-analytic coursework (i.e., seven graduate-level courses) in a *single* semester.

Although a rigorously implemented competency-based program could be delivered with integrity, it is unlikely that completing a master's degree or all of the behavior-analytic coursework—which usually takes two years—in a few months will result in the skills or knowledge necessary for BCBA certification. As a result, the BACB contacted the universities where students completed expedited coursework and degrees to determine whether this expedited program completion is expected by them and appropriate. There has been limited success in obtaining assurance from these universities that they employ sufficient security and programmatic controls to prevent shortcuts. At the time, the BACB had no basis to deny these applications because they technically met the BACB's requirements. Consequently, the BACB Board of Directors authorized a subject matter expert (SME) work group to study this issue and determine whether any changes should be made to help protect the integrity of BCBA certification.

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A committee of 11 SMEs met virtually in November 2025 to determine whether refinements were needed to the 2027 Pathway 2 degree and coursework requirements. The committee represented various stakeholder groups to ensure that any recommended changes were properly informed by behavior analysts familiar with university training. This committee included a consumer representative, faculty members, and practitioners, as well as perspectives from a diverse range of geographic locations, university training types, certification types, genders, and races/ethnicities.

The committee reviewed the data and considered various factors, including the increasing popularity of competency-based university programs and the need for guardrails around behavior-analytic coursework to prevent expedited coursework completion, particularly given the discontinuation of the Verified Course Sequence (VCS) system by the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI). The SMEs noted that this emerging issue is time-limited, as Pathway 2 will be discontinued in 2032, when all BCBA applicants will need to have graduated from a degree program accredited by ABAI or the Association for Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA). The committee also acknowledged the BACB's limited ability to engage with university training programs and discussed feasible solutions that the BACB could implement to address this issue. They weighed the possible drawbacks of various solutions, including the administrative complexity of evaluating different types of degree formats.

After an in-depth discussion, the committee recommended, and the BACB Board of Directors approved, the following changes to the Pathway 2 degree and coursework definitions as of January 1, 2027, with the updated text shown in bold red:

#### **2027 BCBA Pathway 2 Behavior-Analytic Degree Update:**

You must have a master's degree or higher from a qualifying institution. **Degrees earned in less than one calendar year, which is defined as three consecutive primary semesters (e.g., Fall, Spring, Summer), four consecutive primary quarters (e.g., Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer), or 12 consecutive months under another model, do not meet this requirement.**

#### **2027 BCBA Pathway 2 Behavior-Analytic Coursework Update:**

You must complete behavior-analytic coursework in certain defined content domains that meet the following requirements:

- The coursework was completed at an institution that has a Pathway 2 Program Contact.
- The coursework was graduate level (i.e., master's or doctoral) and from the qualifying institution at which you were enrolled.
- The coursework was obtained within 10 years of the year the application was submitted (e.g., to apply in 2026, only coursework completed in 2016 or later will be applied).
- You received academic credit for the coursework.
- The coursework reflects that you received a passing grade ("C" or higher in a graded course or "pass" in a pass/fail system) in each course.
- **The entirety of the coursework may not be completed in less than one calendar year, which is defined as three consecutive primary semesters (e.g., Fall, Spring, Summer), four consecutive primary quarters (e.g., Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer), or 12 consecutive months under another model.**

For full details on upcoming eligibility and maintenance requirements, see our [2027 BCBA Requirements](#) document.

## **The BACB's Use of Subject Matter Experts**

The BACB relies on subject matter experts (SMEs) to ensure its certification programs remain professionally relevant, psychometrically sound, and aligned with best practices in the credentialing industry. The BACB's three certification programs are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), an independent body that establishes rigorous standards for certification organizations. NCCA accreditation reflects adherence to these standards and supports the legal defensibility and credibility of BACB certifications. One of NCCA's standards mandates the use of SMEs to inform critical activities, including certification requirements and examination content. Because SMEs are pivotal in guiding the BACB's requirements, examinations, and activities, we thought it would be beneficial to provide more context about the BACB's SMEs.

## Why Use SMEs?

Beyond accreditation requirements, the use of SMEs is a long-standing best practice across the certification industry. Engaging practicing professionals ensures that certification requirements and examinations accurately reflect current professional standards and circumstances. Importantly, this process prevents certification organizations from unilaterally establishing requirements that could inadvertently favor organizational interests over those of the profession or its consumers. In practice, this means that BACB certification requirements and examination content are developed by subgroups of the profession itself, not by BACB staff acting independently.

## How Are SMEs Used?

The BACB uses SMEs in numerous capacities. At any given time, there are approximately 150 SMEs serving on various committees of the BACB Testing Department (e.g., RBT examination item review, BCBA examination item writing). Outside of our examinations, SMEs are also utilized to establish new requirements and revise existing ones (e.g., see the lead article in this issue). We also use SMEs for matters related to ethics and appeal determinations. The [BACB's Board of Directors](#) serves as another group of SMEs, providing input on all of the organization's important decisions. In 2025 alone, the BACB engaged a total of 228 SMEs across its various certification and testing functions.

## Who Are the SMEs?

An SME is an individual whose certification level and professional experience qualify them to provide input on specific certification activities. Because different activities require different perspectives, the BACB uses multiple types of SMEs. For example, when convening an SME committee to review certification requirements, the BACB develops a selection matrix tailored to the topic under review (e.g., RBT certification requirements). Depending on the topic being evaluated, this matrix may include certification level, practice area, years of professional experience, current professional role (e.g., practitioner, faculty member, supervisor, RBT requirements coordinator, consumer representative), geographic location, gender, race/ethnicity, employment setting, and organization size, among other variables. This structured approach helps ensure that recommendations reflect a broad range of perspectives and experiences relevant to the profession and the individuals served by BACB certificants.

Since 2011, the BACB has permitted SMEs to participate in their service to the organization without their names being shared publicly. Although this anonymity reduces public transparency, this policy was adopted to protect SMEs from potential harassment or undue influence, particularly when participating in decisions that may be subject to public disagreement. This approach has supported continued SME participation while preserving the integrity of the review process.

The BACB consistently observes strong engagement from certificants willing to serve as SMEs, a distinction not shared by all certification programs and professions. We are grateful for the time, expertise, and professional service contributed by these individuals, whose efforts directly support the BACB and its mission.

Readers interested in additional information on how BACB certification requirements and examination content are developed are encouraged to review Johnston et al. (2014). Those interested in serving as SMEs should be on the lookout for calls for applications from our Testing Department later this year. We typically recruit every other year for our examination committees, which are great introductory opportunities for getting involved with the BACB.

## Reference

Johnston, J. M., Mellichamp, F. H., Shook, G. L., & Carr, J. E. (2014). Determining BACB examination content and standards. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 7(1), 3–9.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4711728/>

# A Reminder...There Are No Longer Any BACB Task Lists

For more than two decades, the BACB referred to documents describing the content of its certification examinations as *task lists*. These documents were always intended to serve one essential purpose—to convey examination content. Over time, however, they took on numerous secondary functions and eventually came to be regarded as definitive content lists for the profession. The inclusion or omission of a concept or procedure on a task list was often interpreted as an indicator of its professional importance. As a result, task lists exerted significant influence on university curricula, supervised fieldwork programs, and other training activities. Although the content was relevant to these uses, the documents were never designed for those purposes.

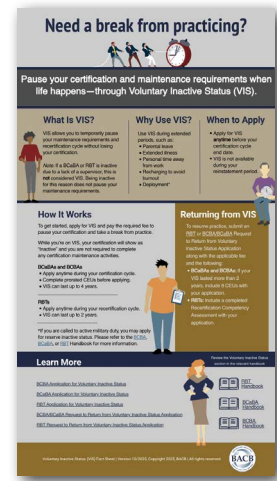
As noted in the [February 2022 BACB Newsletter](#), earlier task lists had acquired an influence well beyond their original intent. To better focus on their original essential purpose, the BACB introduced a change in terminology at that time. The BCBA, BCaBA, and RBT examinations are now based on the [BCBA Test Content Outline \(6th ed.\)](#), [BCaBA Test Content Outline \(6th ed.\)](#), and [RBT Test Content Outline \(3rd ed.\)](#), respectively. From this point forward, there is no longer a BACB document referred to as a *task list*. These test content outlines should be treated exactly as intended: a clear representation of what will appear on an entry-level examination. With this shift in terminology, we encourage everyone to be thoughtful about their use of these documents and how they are described.

## Voluntary Inactive Status (VIS): When Life Gets in the Way of Safe and Competent Practice

The BACB recognizes that life events may temporarily limit a certificant's ability to provide services or maintain certification. Examples of such events include military deployment, parental leave, and the need for physical or mental health care. When a certificant becomes aware of a personal challenge that could impair their ability to practice safely and competently, they may choose to place their certification on voluntary inactive status (VIS) until the issue is resolved, and they can confidently resume safe and competent practice. Taking this proactive step supports both the certificant's well-being and client protection by allowing time away from practice when needed, aligning with BACB ethics requirements (see 1.10 of the [Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts](#) and 1.09 of the [RBT Ethics Code 2.0](#)).

Applying for VIS does not exempt a certificant from enforcement of the BACB's ethics requirements if a mental or physical health condition interferes with a certificant's ability to practice safely and competently, resulting in client harm. However, the certificant's actions to prevent further harm and self-report the event may be considered when the BACB's Ethics Department reviews the facts of the matter. A certificant who places their certification on VIS due to a mental or physical health condition should consult the Ethics and Self-Reporting section of the BACB handbook applicable to their certification level to determine whether self-reporting is required.

Certificants may request VIS if they are **within** an active recertification cycle and have completed continuing education requirements prorated to the number of months elapsed in that cycle. For example, if a BCBA is 12 months into their current certification cycle, they must complete 16 CEUs by the time they apply for VIS. For additional information on VIS and events that must be self-reported, please refer to the [BACB VIS Fact Sheet](#) and the BACB handbook relevant to your certification level.



# Protect Your Certification: A Caution About Sharing on Social Media

The BACB has recently observed an increase in credential misuse linked to social media posts by recently certified individuals. Specifically, new certificants are sharing images of their BACB ID, examination pass score reports, or certificates to celebrate this hard-earned milestone. While we are glad that new certificants want to share this exciting news, it's important to note that sharing this type of information can introduce unintended risks.

In some cases, shared images have been copied and altered by others to falsify credentials and falsely claim BACB certification. There have also been instances in which scam examination preparation groups have used these celebratory posts, without the certificant's knowledge or permission, to advertise their products, even if the certificant did not use those products.

Credential misuse and falsification are serious issues within the profession, with individuals [misrepresenting](#) themselves using another person's identifying information. While we encourage you to continue sharing your accomplishments, to protect yourself and the integrity of your certification, we strongly advise certificants and applicants to avoid sharing images or documents that include BACB IDs, official BACB correspondence, or certificates. Safeguarding your information helps protect you, your colleagues, and the consumers we serve.

## US 529 Plans Now Cover BACB Certification Expenses

Good news! As a result of the [Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act](#), 529 savings plans, traditionally used as tax-advantaged accounts for college or university expenses, have been expanded to cover costs for qualifying postsecondary credential programs. All three of the BACB certifications qualify, making it even easier to apply for and maintain your certification.

In addition to covering the already-approved 529 expenses, such as tuition, books, supplies, equipment, and other related costs for university training programs, the new federal law permits 529 plans to be used for the following BACB expenses:

- RBT 40-hour trainings, because they qualify as an expense for enrollment in a program that prepares individuals to take the RBT examination;
- certification applications, retake applications, and examination scheduling fees;
- BCBA or BCaBA continuing education and RBT professional development fees to maintain your BACB certification; AND
- recertification application fees.

You can find out more about this change in the Professional Certification Coalition's (PCC) [FAQ about the 529 expansion](#). As mentioned in the FAQs, you will also need to check with your specific state 529 plan to determine if it is ready to implement this expansion.

The PCC is a coalition of certifying organizations representing a wide range of professions and has been a steadfast advocate for updating 529 plans to include certification-related expenses. The BACB is proud to be an active member of this coalition and to support its efforts. Through our participation in the PCC, we stay informed about state and federal legislation that may affect our certificants and contribute to advocacy efforts like this one, ensuring that BACB certification continues to deliver value to both current and future certificants.



# FAQs about BACB Fees

We understand that every cost and fee matters, especially now as many of life's expenses are increasing. To provide some transparency about the fees you pay to the BACB, we thought it would be helpful to provide information about our fees and address common questions we have received.

**Q. How often have BCBA and BCaBA application fees increased since the programs launched in 1999?**

- ▶ Once. The BCaBA, BCBA, and BCBA-D initial, retake, and recertification application fees were modestly increased in 2018 to account for inflation between 1998 and 2018 (see the [March 2018 BACB Newsletter](#) for details). Despite further increases in inflation since then, the BACB has avoided raising fees.

**Q. How often have RBT application fees increased since the certification's inception in 2014?**

- ▶ The RBT application fees have changed only once. Starting in 2026, the one-year certification cycle was changed to two years, and fees were adjusted slightly. However, the fee change was intentionally kept budget-neutral to allow the BACB to maintain low costs for applicants, certificants, and employers (see the [December 2023 BACB Newsletter](#) for details).

**Q. What do the fees I pay to the BACB cover?**

- ▶ The fees you pay cover various essential costs, including processing applications, conducting audits, responding to inquiries about certification, administering examinations, and BACB operations. Additionally, the fees support the development and maintenance of rigorous examinations, as well as the review and processing of ethics cases related to alleged ethics code violations. Coordination efforts with licensure boards and small grants to countries working to develop their behavior-analytic infrastructure are also covered. Resources provided to support certificants, such as free access to journal articles for BCBA and BCaBA certificants, are also included. These fees have been instrumental in allowing the BACB to grow and adapt during a time of rapid growth for the profession over the last decade (see the Certificant Data Update in the [December 2025 BACB Newsletter](#)).

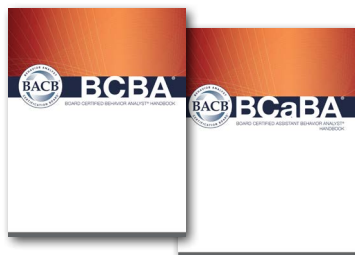
**Q. Why aren't my fees going toward a better experience in my BACB account?**

- ▶ They are. The BACB has been actively working on a revamp of the BACB portal and plans to launch it as soon as it is ready.



# BACB Resource Corner: Supervised Fieldwork

In each issue of the BACB Newsletter, we highlight useful BACB resources to help you stay informed and support your success. This issue focuses specifically on supervised fieldwork resources.



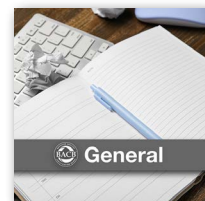
## BCBA and BCaBA Handbooks

The ultimate resource for supervised fieldwork is the fieldwork section in the BCBA and BCaBA Handbooks. This section was recently updated to better articulate both the requirements and the overall experience. As a reminder, any substantive changes are reflected in the Version History and Updates section at the end of the handbooks.

There are also a number of fieldwork resources, some of which are older but still relevant, as well as a few recently released resources that may be beneficial for trainees and fieldwork supervisors:

### **\*New\*** Fieldwork: Getting It Right Blog Post

This new blog post addresses common questions about supervised fieldwork, including unrestricted hours, remote supervision, and more.

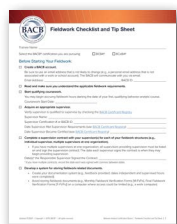
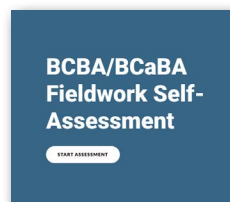


### **\*New\*** Making Sense of Fieldwork Podcast

This new *Inside the BACB* podcast episode is a companion to the [Fieldwork: Getting It Right](#) blog post, featuring discussions about why fieldwork is required and answers to common fieldwork questions.

### **\*New\*** Fieldwork Self-Assessment

Use this self-assessment to gauge your understanding of the requirements around fieldwork. Take the assessment multiple times to improve your score, but be aware—the questions may change with each attempt!



## Fieldwork Checklist and Tip Sheet

Use this checklist to ensure your fieldwork hours meet all the requirements. Not sure what category an activity falls under? Refer to the examples on this checklist for more information.

## Fieldwork Checklist for Supervisors

Supervisors can use this checklist to ensure they are complying with fieldwork requirements. It also includes tips for creating a supervised fieldwork experience that is effective and rewarding.



## Supervising Future Behavior Analysts Video

If you are new to fieldwork or want an easy way to provide someone else with an overview of the requirements, this brief video is a great resource.



# Recent & Upcoming Changes to BACB Requirements

The following table summarizes important changes to BACB requirements that have been announced in BACB newsletters or other resources.

Effective Date	Area	Change	Source
July 1, 2024	RBT and BCaBA Certification in Ontario	Ontario residents will no longer be able to apply for RBT or BCaBA certification. Those holding RBT and BCaBA certification in Ontario will have their certification placed on voluntary inactive status.	<a href="#">Upcoming Changes to BACB Certification in Ontario</a>
January 1, 2026	BCBA and BCaBA Verified Coursework	All pathway 2 certification applications will require that a Coursework Attestation is completed by a designated program contact.	January 2023 announcement to VCS Coordinators
	Noncertified RBT Supervisors	Noncertified RBT Supervisor role eliminated. RBT Supervisors must hold BCaBA or BCBA certification.	<a href="#">September 2023 Newsletter</a>
	RBT Eligibility and Maintenance Requirements	Revisions to core RBT eligibility and maintenance requirements, including training, competency assessments, and professional development. Recertification cycles will change from 1 to 2 years.	<a href="#">December 2023 Newsletter</a>
	RBT Examination	The RBT examination will be based on the RBT Test Content Outline (3rd ed.).	<a href="#">December 2023 Newsletter</a>
	BACB Certification in the UK	Residents of the United Kingdom (UK) will no longer be able to apply for BACB certification. Those holding BACB certifications in the UK will be able to maintain their certification.	<a href="#">International Development and Support</a>
July 1, 2026	BCBA Certification in Ontario	Ontario residents will no longer be able to apply for BCBA/BCBA-D certification. Those holding BCBA/BCBA-D certification in Ontario will be able to maintain their certification.	<a href="#">Upcoming Changes to BACB Certification in Ontario</a>
	ACE Provider Requirements	Revisions to ACE Provider requirements, including instructor qualifications and expertise requirements, and organizational requirements.	<a href="#">Upcoming Changes to ACE Provider Requirements</a>

Effective Date	Area	Change	Source
January 1, 2027	BCBA Eligibility and Maintenance Requirements	Revisions to core certification requirements, including degree, coursework, supervised fieldwork, continuing education, and ongoing supervision. Pathways 3 and 4 discontinued.	<a href="#">2027 BCBA Requirements</a> <a href="#">February 2026 Newsletter</a> <a href="#">March 2025 Newsletter</a> <a href="#">March 2022 Newsletter</a>
	BCaBA Eligibility and Maintenance Requirements	Revisions to core certification requirements, including degree, coursework, supervised fieldwork, continuing education, and ongoing supervision.	<a href="#">2027 BCaBA Requirements</a> <a href="#">March 2025 Newsletter</a> <a href="#">March 2022 Newsletter</a>
	BACB Certification in Australia	Residents of Australia will no longer be able to apply for BACB certification. Those holding BACB certifications in Australia will be able to maintain their certification.	<a href="#">July 2024 Newsletter</a>
January 1, 2032	BCBA Eligibility Pathways	Pathway 1, which requires a degree from an accredited university training program, will be the only eligibility pathway for BCBA certification.	<a href="#">September 2023 Newsletter</a> <a href="#">March 2022 Newsletter</a>