



# Recent Changes to the BACB's International Focus

December 30, 2019

After extensive deliberation by the BACB's leadership and their consideration of multiple factors (see *Underlying Rationale* below), the BACB Board of Directors voted in August 2019 to substantially revise the BACB's international focus. The changes are as follows:

- **Certification** – Effective January 1, 2023, initial BACB certification applications will no longer be accepted from individuals who reside outside of the U.S. and Canada. Individuals who earn certification prior to January 1, 2023, will be able to maintain their certification in perpetuity. *Note: BACB certifications will remain available in Canada due to the similarities between the Canadian and U.S. educational, regulatory, and economic environments.*
- **Translated Examinations** – Effective January 1, 2022, BACB examinations will only be offered in English. *Note: The BACB may entertain conducting a needs analysis as soon as late 2020 for examinations in languages other than English in the U.S. and Canada depending on viability, demand, and advisability.*
- **International Assistance** – Effective immediately, the BACB will reallocate resources to assist national behavior analysis organizations in other countries in the development of their systems, standards and their own local credentialing programs.

## Background

The BACB was established in 1998 in the United States (U.S.) to meet national certification needs as is evident in the title of the first journal article published by BACB personnel: "A National Certification Program for Behavior Analysts" ([Johnston & Shook, 2001](#)). At the request of colleagues in other countries, the BACB soon began engaging in international activity: In 2001, the BACB awarded its first certification to a behavior analyst outside of the U.S., and in 2002, the BACB approved the first course sequence in a country other than the U.S. In its first 14 years of operation, the BACB's international activities involved making its certifications, course-sequence approvals, and English-language examinations available to any party, regardless of geography. The BACB later expanded these activities in a number of ways:

- adding two international representatives to its Board of Directors
- adding a doctoral-level behavior analyst as its Director of International Development
- translating examinations into languages other than English
- increasing involvement of subject matter experts outside of the U.S. in its workgroups
- covering the cost of academic-degree evaluations for international certification applicants

The BACB's international activities were predicated on the generality of behavioral principles. The thinking was that because all human behavior, regardless of culture, responds to environmental variables (i.e., operant, respondent) in predictable ways, a global behavior analyst certification program would perhaps be more feasible for applied behavior analysis than for other professions.

## Underlying Rationale

The rationale behind changing our international focus is multifaceted and was shaped over a multiyear period following extensive research, training from the certification industry, and consultation with certification and testing experts. In formulating our rationale, we considered the following:

1. **Is it viable to have global requirements for a profession?** Our first consideration was the logistical feasibility of one set of global requirements for a major profession. No other major profession (e.g., medicine, psychology, accounting) has a single set of global requirements; country-specific requirements are the standard practice. Over the past decade, the BACB has encountered numerous challenges associated with operating in multiple countries. Primary among these has been language barriers. Although the BACB has made numerous translated examinations available, a certification program encompasses much more than the initial examination. To be a truly global certification entity and give every constituent the same experience (as a required entitlement), the BACB would need to make the following available in the languages of all applicants and certificants: the entire website, newsletters, documents, mass email communications, the certificant online account, and phone- and email-based customer service. Unfortunately, such a comprehensive endeavor is not feasible. In addition, a global certification program requires:

- the ability to ensure that its eligibility and maintenance requirements are legally defensible in each country, its intellectual property and trademarks can be adequately protected in each country, its fee activity is consistent with local tax laws in each country, and its ethics requirements are legally enforceable in each country.
- the existence of multiple secure testing facilities in every country. Some countries simply do not have testing facilities that meet the BACB's security requirements.
- compliance with each country's privacy laws. Such laws have been rapidly changing in recent years.
- compliance with each country's examination-accommodations laws. The BACB's accommodations activities have been designed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other national laws when possible. However, the sheer number of national laws concerning accommodations and the rapid pace at which they are changing have made it challenging to ensure compliance.
- sufficient time to establish certification standards and achieve recognition of them in each country.
- the regulatory viability of the credential in each country. Regulators may be disinclined to recognize standards that are not necessarily specific to their country and its practices. This is perhaps the greatest barrier to the globalization of a profession.

In addition, the transient nature of international trade restrictions that affect a number of countries would require continuous monitoring and could be unfairly disruptive to prospective and current certificants in countries impacted by such restrictions.

2. **Can global certification programs meet accreditation standards?** The second consideration in the evaluation of international activity relates to the BACB's accreditation of the BCBA, BCaBA, and RBT certification programs by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). This accreditation means that the BACB operates its certification programs consistent with established testing, certification, and legal standards (predominantly within the U.S. and Canadian environments). NCCA accreditation, and what it conveys to policy stakeholders, is one of the main reasons BACB certification programs have been written into hundreds of laws and funding policies. An overarching accreditation standard is that certification requirements be consistent, regardless of location. This means that the BACB cannot simply make country-by-country changes to the operation of its certification programs or standards to address the issues raised earlier.

3. **Are BACB certification requirements appropriate for some countries, but not others?** Recognizing that the BACB certification requirements may be appropriate and a good match with existing regulatory frameworks for some countries, it is important to keep in mind that, in other countries, BACB certification may not be appropriate. While we have historically included subject matter experts from outside of the U.S. on our various requirements committees, the evolution of our requirements over the past two decades has occurred primarily against the backdrop of the U.S. and Canadian environments. We want to allow sufficient time for other countries to develop and refine their behavior-analytic standards. Introduced in 1998, the initial requirements for BCBA certification were intentionally broad because that was what the U.S. infrastructure could support 21 years ago: 180 hours of graduate instruction in behavior analysis (i.e., four 3-credit semester-long courses) and 18 months of practical experience in the profession. It is likely, therefore, that some countries will require their own timelines to establish entry-level requirements that may be different than the BACB's current certification requirements. We have also received feedback that our ethics requirements are not always sufficiently sensitive to practices across cultures. This could be remedied by countries developing their own ethics requirements.

## Relevant Data (as of January 2020)

Despite the fact that the BACB has made its certifications, course-sequence approvals, and examinations available to everyone for nearly two decades, the data in the figure below show that only 3.7% of the total number of BACB certificants reside in countries other than the U.S. and Canada – 4.7% are BCBAAs (n=1,803), 12.3% are BCaBAs (n=499), and 2.6% are RBTs (n=1,857). The figure also depicts BCBA translated-examination activity since 2015. The data also show very low numbers of first-time, translated-examination candidates.

BACB Certificants				
Certification	Overall	U.S.	Canada	All Other Countries
BCBA	37,859	34,675	1,381	1,803
BCaBA	4,044	3,372	173	499
RBT	70,361	68,795	529	1,857

Examination Languages									
	English	Chinese	Spanish	Hebrew	Italian	Brazilian Portuguese	Korean	Russian	Polish
2015	3273	0	10	8	28	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2016	4037	0	24	7	19	0	9	N/A	N/A
2017	4691	3	35	7	20	2	24	1	2
2018	5933	10	74	8	48	2	39	9	1
2019	6637	13	127	7	50	2	31	14	2

## New International System

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge and thank the BACB certificants, BACB course sequences, and professional association members outside of the U.S. and Canada for their dedication to the BACB’s standards and certification programs. Thank you! Many of you provided us with invaluable subject matter expertise and exceptional volunteer assistance. We hope that the next era of behavior analyst credentialing outside of the U.S. and Canada will see a commitment to country-specific standards that help foster the future growth of the profession in many countries.

The BACB remains committed to its international colleagues and its global mission “to protect consumers of behavior analysis services worldwide by systematically establishing, promoting, and disseminating professional standards.” Since this mission will not be achieved exclusively through BACB certification, the BACB has developed a new system for providing assistance to its colleagues around the world. Effective immediately, a national behavior analysis organization outside of the U.S. and Canada may formally request that BACB certifications be made available in its country after December 31, 2022. The application, which is [now available](#), will require a comprehensive assessment of the professional landscape within the target country (conducted by the applicant); a thorough analysis of testing capacity, trademark, tax, and trade laws (conducted by the BACB). Following review of the application and completion of the ancillary research, the BACB Board of Directors will make a final decision on the matter.

Additionally, the BACB will reallocate staff and financial resources to assist national behavior analysis organizations outside of the U.S. and Canada in developing independent behavior analyst credentials that best meet their needs and are feasible in light of their current professional infrastructure. BACB support may include grants for consultation with credentialing experts, meetings with stakeholders, examination development assistance, and free consultation from the BACB on developing and maintaining a credentialing program. Requests for such assistance may be submitted via the [Request for International Support Form](#).

## Answers to Your Questions

The BACB recognizes that revising its international focus may have professional implications for individuals who reside in countries outside of the U.S. and Canada. We also recognize that these individuals may have concerns and questions. The following information is being provided for certificants and trainees to support them in making appropriate preparations well in advance of January 1, 2023.

### For BACB certificants residing outside of the U.S. and Canada

**Q: Will I be able to practice or work outside of the U.S. and Canada starting January 1, 2023?**

Yes, this decision does not restrict the ability of individuals to practice applied behavior analysis consistent with the BACB's ethics requirements.

**Q: Will I be affected by this change?**

No, there will be no change to your certification status. You will be able to continue to use and refer to your BACB certification wherever you live as long as you continue to maintain your certification. However, starting January 1, 2023, certificants practicing in any country where BACB certification is not offered will need to ensure that they truthfully advertise their credentials and clearly indicate whether the BACB is currently issuing certifications in that country. See, 2.05(a) and 8.01(b) of the Professional and Ethical Compliance Code.

**Q: Will I be able to represent myself as a BACB certificant outside of the U.S. and Canada from January 1, 2023?"**

It depends. Certificants practicing in any country where BACB certification is not currently issued will need to ensure that they truthfully advertise their certification by indicating that it is not currently issued in that country. A non-practicing certificant residing in a country where BACB certification is not currently issued may choose to maintain their certification but would need to truthfully advertise their certification if they choose to return to practice in that country.

**Q: Can I apply for the doctoral designation after January 1, 2023?**

One may only apply for the doctoral designation if already holding active BCBA certification. All examination authorizations for candidates residing outside of the U.S. and Canada will end on December 31, 2022, so if not a BCBA by that point then the doctoral designation will not be available. However, any BCBA, irrespective of when and where they were certified and irrespective of where they reside may apply for the doctoral designation even after December 31, 2022.

### For BACB certificants residing within the U.S. or Canada

**Q: Will I be able to practice or work outside of the U.S. and Canada from January 1, 2023?**

Yes, this decision does not restrict the ability of individuals to practice applied behavior analysis consistent with the BACB's ethics requirements.

**Q: Will I be able to represent myself as a BACB certificant outside of the U.S. and Canada from January 1, 2023?"**

It depends. Certificants practicing in any country where BACB certification is not currently issued will need to ensure that they truthfully advertise their certification by indicating that it is not currently issued in that country.

**Q: I am consulting in another country. Will I still be able to do this after 2022?**

This decision does not restrict the ability of individuals to practice applied behavior analysis consistent with the BACB's ethics requirements. Certificants practicing in any country where BACB certification is not currently issued will need to ensure that they truthfully advertise their certification by indicating that it is not currently issued in that country.

**Q: I am providing continuing education (CE) in another country. Will I still be able to provide CE events in other countries after 2022?**

CE activities can still be delivered anywhere in the world and are not affected by this change.

**Q: I am providing supervision to BCBA/BCaBA trainees, BCBAAs or RBTs in another country. Will I still be able to provide supervision in other countries after 2022?**

There is currently no prohibition against such activity. However, subject matter experts on future BCBA, BCaBA, and RBT requirements committees will directly address this matter in their recommendations to the BACB Board of Directors.

**For those pursuing certification residing outside of the U.S. and Canada**

**Q: If I am certified prior to 2023, will I be able to represent myself as a BACB certificant outside of the U.S. and Canada from January 1, 2023?**

It depends. Certificants practicing in any country where BACB certification is not currently issued will need to ensure that they truthfully advertise their certification by indicating that it is not currently issued in that country. A nonpracticing certificant residing in a country where BACB certification is not currently issued may choose to maintain their certification but would need to truthfully advertise their certification if they choose to return to practice in that country.

**Q: If I have an open examination authorization will I be allowed to take the examination from January 1, 2023 until my authorization expires?**

No. All examination authorizations for candidates residing outside of the U.S. and Canada will end on December 31, 2022. In addition, BACB examinations will no longer be available at testing centers outside of the U.S. and Canada after this date.

**Q: If I have an open examination authorization will I be allowed to take a translated (non-English) examination from January 1, 2022?**

No. All non-English BCBA and BCaBA examinations will be discontinued as of January 1, 2022. However, if you have an open examination authorization at that time, you may continue testing in English until December 31, 2022.

**Q: I am currently training to become a behavior analyst but will not graduate until after 2022. Am I still able to apply for BACB certification at that time if I am willing to travel to the U.S. or Canada to take the examination?**

No. BACB certification applications will only be accepted from individuals residing in the U.S. or Canada at the time of application (beginning in 2023). The rationale for announcing these changes three years in advance is to give individuals ample time to complete their training and pursue BACB certification if that is one of their professional goals.

**Q: I live and received my training outside of the U.S. and Canada. If I move to either of those countries in the future may I apply for BACB certification?**

Yes. After 2022, BACB certification applications will only be accepted from individuals residing in the U.S. or Canada at the time of application. Any training acquired outside of the U.S. or Canada must meet eligibility requirements at that time.

**Q: Will Verified Course Sequences still operate outside of the U.S. and Canada?**

Because the Association for Behavior Analysis International now operates the Verified Course Sequence (VCS) system, we cannot answer this question. However, VCS status has significant value independent of its relation to BACB certification because it conveys a concentrated curriculum in behavior analysis and permits those training programs to be included in the VCS training directory.

**Q: If I complete university coursework outside of the US and Canada and then move to the U.S. or Canada, will my coursework meet eligibility requirements for BACB certification?**

Yes. Applications submitted after December 31, 2022 can include coursework, academic degrees, and fieldwork that was completed outside of the U.S. and Canada, but applicants must ensure that they meet the then current standards.