

BACB Newsletter

Introducing the 2026 RBT Examination and Certification Requirements



Content:

- ▶ 2026 RBT Examination 1
 - ▶ Job Task Analysis 1
 - ▶ Test Content Outline 2
 - ▶ Examination Content Domain and Blueprint Crosswalk 3
 - ▶ Implementation Timeline... 3
- ▶ RBT Eligibility and Maintenance Requirements... 3
 - ▶ Review Process 3
 - ▶ Eligibility Requirements..... 4
 - ▶ Maintenance Requirements 5
 - ▶ Summary of 2026 RBT Requirements 7
 - ▶ Fees 8
 - ▶ Implementation Timeline... 9
- ▶ Changes to the 2025 BCaBA Examination 9
- ▶ Recent and Upcoming Changes to BACB Requirements 9

The BACB® periodically reviews eligibility, examination, and maintenance requirements for its certification programs to ensure that they reflect changes in professional practice and the current state of the applied behavior analysis profession. These periodic reviews involve committees of subject matter experts (SMEs) who serve as the guiding force behind recommendations for new and revised requirements. Because the profession has undergone substantial change in recent years and the Registered Behavior Technician® (RBT®) certification requirements have not been reviewed since 2017, SME committees were convened in 2022 and 2023 to review RBT eligibility, examination, and maintenance requirements for relevance to current practice. The following sections describe the review process, the current requirements, and the approved changes that will go into effect in 2026. We note that the [RBT Ethics Code \(2.0\)](#) was not reviewed because it was recently implemented in 2022 (see the [July 2021 BACB Newsletter](#)).

2026 RBT Examination

Job Task Analysis

Job task analysis (JTA) is the predominant method for developing high-stakes examinations for professions, and it has been used in the development of all BACB examinations. The JTA process includes developing a draft Test Content Outline (TCO), vetting the draft TCO using a content-validation survey, and finalizing an examination blueprint. This process began in February 2022 and was facilitated by Pearson VUE psychometricians. It involved multiple SMEs, facilitated by BACB staff, who were responsible for TCO content review and revision. The SMEs represented a diverse range of professional roles, career stages, geographic locations, genders, races/ethnicities, and practice areas to ensure that there were a variety of perspectives involved in the discussions. All SMEs were certified at the RBT, BCBA®, or BCBA-D® level.

The development of the draft RBT TCO (3rd ed.) began in a 2-day virtual meeting in February 2022. In the meeting, a 12-member SME committee received training on the JTA process and its purpose, reviewed numerous data sets related to RBT certification, and reviewed the evolution of RBT

WWW.BACB.COM

© 2023 Behavior Analyst Certification Board®, Inc. (BACB®). All rights reserved.

certification requirements. After extensive discussions about RBT certification and the role of behavior technicians in the profession, the SMEs thoroughly reviewed the [RBT Task List \(2nd ed.\)](#) and used it as the basis for the new TCO. After 2 days of discussion and consensus-based decision-making, the SMEs produced a draft TCO, ready for content validation. Accordingly, in May 2022, the draft TCO was sent via email to all current RBT certificants and RBT Supervisors in a content-validation survey.

Survey respondents were presented with the draft TCO's task statements and were asked to assess their importance and frequency in practice. Of the 23,330 individuals who clicked the survey link, 4,714 RBTs and 5,045 RBT Supervisors completed the survey and rated all task statements. BACB and Pearson VUE staff reviewed the data and respondent commentary before finalizing the TCO. Ultimately, no tasks were removed from or added to the draft TCO through the content-validation survey.

The final step in the JTA process was a 2-day in-person meeting of 10 SMEs (including 3 from the TCO-development meeting) in August 2022 to finalize the TCO and develop new examination specifications. Examination specifications include the distribution of content from each domain that will appear on the examination and the number of questions related to each task. After carefully reviewing the content-validation survey results, the SMEs developed the final examination blueprint by determining the relative weightings of the content domains and questions. The JTA results and the new [RBT Test Content Outline \(3rd ed.\)](#) were reviewed and approved by the BACB Board of Directors in August 2023.

Test Content Outline

The JTA process resulted in modest changes to the content that will appear on the RBT examination beginning in 2026. The 6 content domains on the RBT Task List (2nd ed.) were retained with 4 minor title revisions. Task statements that were retained were revised for clarity, and all task statements now include more purposeful verbs. The Professional Conduct and Scope of Practice domain (retitled *Ethics*) now includes 10 specific tasks rather than references to the entire RBT Ethics Code (2.0). There was an overall net increase of 6 tasks (43 total), as 4 tasks were removed, 4 tasks were revised to include additional RBT responsibilities, and 2 tasks were expanded into 4 tasks. Finally, the following 8 tasks were added, although some of their elements were included in past task statements.

- A.6. Calculate and summarize data in different ways (e.g., rate, mean duration, percentage).
- A.7. Identify trends in graphed data.
- A.8. Describe the risks with unreliable data collection and poor procedural fidelity.
- D.5. Implement positive and negative punishment procedures (e.g., time-out).
- D.6. Describe secondary effects of extinction (e.g., extinction burst, response variation, resurgence, emotional responding) and punishment (e.g., emotional responses, escape and avoidance).
- F.1. Identify and apply core principles underlying the BACB's ethics code for RBT certificants (e.g., benefit others; treat others with compassion, dignity, and respect; behave with integrity).
- F.8. Adhere to the gift giving and receiving guidelines provided by the BACB's ethics code for RBT certificants.
- F.10. Engage in ongoing cultural humility and responsiveness (e.g., identify personal biases) in service delivery and professional relationships.

Examination Content Domain and Blueprint Crosswalk

Domain	# of Tasks		# of Questions (% of Exam)	
	2nd Edition	3rd Edition	2nd Edition	3rd Edition
A. Data Collection and Graphing <i>Previously titled Measurement</i>	6	8	12 (16%)	13 (17%)
B. Behavior Assessment <i>Previously titled Assessment</i>	3	3	6 (8%)	8 (11%)
C. Behavior Acquisition <i>Previously titled Skill Acquisition</i>	12	11	24 (32%)	19 (25%)
D. Behavior Reduction	6	7	12 (16%)	14 (19%)
E. Documentation and Reporting	5	4	10 (13%)	10 (13%)
F. Ethics <i>Previously titled Professional Conduct and Scope of Practice</i>	5	10	11 (15%)	11 (15%)
Total	37	43	75	75

Implementation Timeline

Beginning January 1, 2026, the RBT examination will be based on the RBT Test Content Outline (3rd ed.). Please note that candidates must test under the current edition of the RBT examination regardless of when their application was approved or when their authorization period began.

RBT Eligibility and Maintenance Requirements

Review Process

In March 2023, a committee of 12 SMEs participated in a 2-day in-person meeting to evaluate the current RBT certification requirements. SMEs on the RBT Requirements Committee (Requirements Committee) either held RBT certification or were involved in supervising, training, and/or employing RBTs. All SMEs were certified at the RBT, BCBA, or BCBA-D level. The SMEs represented a diverse range of organizations, roles, career stages, geographic locations, genders, and races/ethnicities to ensure that there were a variety of perspectives involved in the discussions.

At the meeting's outset, the Requirements Committee was presented with data illustrating the growth of RBT certification, a description of the BACB's requirement-review process, and a summary of key historical changes to RBT requirements. In the meeting, the current RBT requirements were presented one at a time for review and discussion. Where relevant, the Requirements Committee reviewed data from internal BACB systems, comparable professions, and data from a 2022 BACB survey with over 5,000 respondents involved with supervising, overseeing, and training RBTs. The Requirements Committee also reviewed a draft RBT training curriculum outline that was developed by a separate, earlier group of SMEs, the RBT Training Curriculum Workgroup (Curriculum Workgroup). The Curriculum Workgroup, composed of 7 SMEs who were involved in RBT training and/or RBT services, met virtually before the March 2023 Requirements Committee meeting.

The Requirements Committee reviewed and discussed each requirement carefully and, through a consensus approach, ultimately recommended that each requirement be revised, removed, or left intact. Their recommendations were reviewed and approved by the BACB Board of Directors in August 2023.

The following sections describe the current RBT requirements and the approved changes that will go into effect on **January 1, 2026**.

Eligibility Requirements

Age, Education, and Background Check

Current RBT applicants must be at least 18 years of age, have a high-school-level education or equivalent, and have passed a criminal background and abuse registry check comparable to those required of home health aides, childcare professionals, and teachers in their community.

The Requirements Committee reviewed these requirements and data from recent applicants. They considered that 18 years is the age of majority in the BACB's current jurisdictions, so any age reduction would require parental/caregiver consent as part of the application process. They also considered the fact that 69.6% (44,191) of the 2022 RBT applicants had a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest level of education. Therefore, increasing the education requirement would result in a significant reduction in the workforce. Finally, the Requirements Committee discussed the background-check requirement and agreed that it continues to be important for consumer protection.

As a result, the Requirements Committee reaffirmed the appropriateness of and recommended no changes to the current age, education, and background-check requirements.

Training Requirements

Content and Duration. Current RBT applicants must complete a 40-hour training that covers the RBT Task List (2nd ed.), the RBT Ethics Code (2.0), and BACB supervision requirements.

In addition to describing the content of the RBT examination, the RBT Task List has historically served as the primary content outline for the RBT 40-hour training. As of 2026, the RBT TCO's sole purpose will be to describe examination content, so a dedicated curriculum for RBT training will be required in 2026. The curriculum outline, featured in the new [RBT 40-Hour Training Requirements and Curriculum](#) document, was developed by the Curriculum Workgroup (described earlier) and was further refined by the Requirements Committee.

The curriculum outline includes 54 topics in 8 content areas, which are *Introduction to Applied Behavior Analysis*, *Preparing for Service Delivery*, *Data Collection and Graphing*, *Assisting with Behavior Assessments*, *Behavior-Change Interventions*, *Service Delivery Documentation and Reporting*, *Ethics and Professionalism*, and *Next Steps in the Certification Process*. Some of these areas are new and well-suited for training, such as *Preparing for Service Delivery* and *Next Steps in the Certification Process*. The curriculum outline incorporates the content of the new TCO. Topics that appear in the TCO are identified in the curriculum outline. Further, the new training requirements specify that the content should be covered in the context of behavior technician service delivery. For instance, training on the task *Understand the conceptual and procedural aspects of shaping* should primarily be focused on giving the trainee a basic understanding of shaping and how to implement a behavior plan that includes a shaping procedure, rather than a generic overview of shaping.

After reviewing the curriculum outline, the Requirements Committee discussed the current 40-hour duration requirement, and they were strongly in favor of keeping it. However, they recommended adding minimum duration requirements to the content sections to promote consistency across training experiences. As shown in the curriculum outline, the minimum training duration for each content section is as follows:

- Introduction to Applied Behavior Analysis: 2 Hours
- Preparing for Service Delivery: 1 Hour
- Data Collection and Graphing: 3 Hours
- Assisting with Behavior Assessments: 3 Hours
- Behavior-Change Interventions: 20 Hours
- Service Delivery Documentation and Reporting: 3 Hours
- Ethics and Professionalism: 5 Hours
- Next Steps in the Certification Process: 1 Hour

In addition, the Requirements Committee recommended that 2 of the 40 hours be discretionary, meaning that they may be added to any of the content sections to meet the 40-hour duration requirement.

Trainer Qualifications. Currently, RBT training must be overseen by a Responsible Trainer who holds an active BCaBA®, BCBA, or BCBA-D certification. The Responsible Trainer may delegate some or all of the training to an Assistant Trainer who is proficient in the content.

The Requirements Committee recommended keeping the Responsible Trainer role. However, in addition to holding an active BCaBA, BCBA, or BCBA-D certification, the Responsible Trainer will also need to complete the [8-hour supervision training](#). This requirement was added because Responsible Trainers need supervision skills if they oversee Assistant Trainer(s). The Requirements Committee also discussed the Assistant Trainer role. Because of the importance of this training, the Requirements Committee recommended requiring that the Assistant Trainer hold an RBT certification or higher.

In summary, the Requirements Committee recommended that applicants for RBT certification must have completed training that covers the content in the new curriculum outline, with additional qualifications for the Responsible and Assistant Trainers.

Initial Competency Assessment

Content and Structure. After completing their RBT 40-hour training and within 90 days of applying for RBT certification, RBT applicants must have a qualified assessor complete their [RBT Initial Competency Assessment](#).

The Requirements Committee agreed that the Initial Competency Assessment is still a valuable eligibility requirement, as it is an opportunity to assess the impact of training. The Requirements Committee reviewed the Initial Competency Assessment and recommended 3 changes:

- Remove the “stimulus control transfer” task because it is not necessary for all entry-level RBTs and is functionally covered in other tasks.
- Remove the “interview” assessment option in the Measurement section.
- Add an “interview” assessment option to the “crisis/emergency” task because the applicants might not yet have received full crisis training.

Assessor Qualifications. Currently, the Responsible Assessor completes the Initial Competency Assessment. They must hold a BCaBA, BCBA, or BCBA-D certification and have completed the [8-hour supervision training](#). The Responsible Assessor may delegate some or all of the assessment to an Assistant Assessor who has proficiency in the tasks being assessed.

The Requirements Committee discussed both of these roles and recommended two changes. First, as announced in the [September 2023 BACB Newsletter](#), the Responsible Assessor, Assistant Assessor(s), and RBT applicant must be employed at (or all have a contractual relationship with) the same organization delivering services to the client involved in the assessment. Second, because of the importance of the competency assessment, the Requirements Committee recommended requiring that the Assistant Assessor hold an RBT certification or higher.

Maintenance Requirements

Supervision

Current RBT certificants must be supervised by a qualified RBT Supervisor or RBT Requirements Coordinator for at least 5% of their behavior-analytic service hours, and they must be observed during service delivery at least once a month per organization at which they are employed. The supervision must include 2 face-to-face contacts with at least 1 of those contacts taking place in an individual supervision meeting.

The Requirements Committee recommended keeping the current supervision requirements. This is the third consecutive review of these requirements by SMEs where the requirements have been affirmed. The Requirements Committee also reviewed the RBT Supervisor and RBT Requirements Coordinator roles and their qualifications. Aside from the removal of the noncertified RBT Supervisor role that was announced in the [September 2023 BACB Newsletter](#), they recommended no additional changes.

Recertification Requirements and Cycle

RBTs currently have an annual renewal requirement, in which they must have a qualified assessor complete their [RBT Renewal Competency Assessment](#).

During their review, the Requirements Committee considered the original purpose of the maintenance requirements, which is to ensure that RBTs remain proficient in performing critical skills. The ongoing supervision requirement serves this purpose, including monthly observations of the RBT's skills during service delivery to ensure that they are successfully performing critical skills on a regular basis. However, the Requirements Committee indicated that, now more than ever, RBTs must improve upon and learn new skills rather than demonstrate maintenance of entry-level skills.

For this reason, the Requirements Committee recommended removing the Renewal Competency Assessment requirement and replacing it with an ongoing professional development requirement. Considering this new focus on ongoing learning, the Requirements Committee also recommended moving to a 2-year recertification cycle (consistent with the BCBA and BCaBA recertification cycles). They recommended that RBTs complete 12 hours of professional development in the 2-year cycle. The professional development may be in one or more of the following areas:



In the next few years, we will begin using "recertify" rather than "renew" to be consistent with BCBA and BCaBA terminology.

Professional Development Type	Provider	Documentation
An organization's in-service training related to behavior-analytic service delivery (does not include training on a specific client's program)	A BCaBA, BCBA, or BCBA-D at the RBT's service organization	Trainer documentation (further details will be provided before 2026)
Continuing education event	Authorized Continuing Education (ACE) Provider(s)	Certificate from the ACE Provider
Didactic behavior-analytic university courses with a passing grade ("C" or higher in a graded course or "pass" in a pass/fail system)	An accredited university	Syllabi and transcripts from university courses

Note: Ongoing RBT supervision, client-specific training, and supervised fieldwork toward BCaBA or BCBA certification will not count toward this requirement.

Reentry Competency Assessment (Return from Voluntary Inactive Status)

As of January 1, 2026, those who place their certification on voluntary inactive status will be required to complete a Reentry Competency Assessment as part of the [RBT Request to Return from Voluntary Inactive Status Application](#). The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that they can still complete the skills necessary for service delivery. This assessment will be the same as the current Renewal Competency Assessment. Aside from the name change of the competency assessment, there will be no additional changes to the RBT Request to Return from Voluntary Inactive Status requirements as of January 1, 2026.

Summary of 2026 RBT Requirements

The following tables summarize the 2026 RBT eligibility and maintenance requirements and provide a crosswalk with the current requirements:

RBT Eligibility Requirements		
	Current	2026
Age	Must be at least 18 years old to apply	No change
Education	Must have at least a high-school-level education or equivalent to apply	No change
Background Check	Must have completed and passed a criminal background and abuse registry check within 180 days of applying	No change
RBT 40-Hour Training		
Content	All tasks in the RBT Task List (2nd ed.) and supplemental ethics and supervision content	New curriculum outline
Duration	40 hours	40 hours with duration requirements for each content section
Duration Limits	Maximum 180 days Minimum 5 days	No change
Trainer Qualifications	Responsible Trainer: Must hold a BCaBA, BCBA, or BCBA-D certification	Responsible Trainer: Must hold a BCaBA, BCBA, or BCBA-D certification and have completed the 8-hour supervision training
	Assistant Trainer: None	Assistant Trainer: Must hold an RBT certification or higher
RBT Initial Competency Assessment		
Content	RBT Initial Competency Assessment	RBT Initial Competency Assessment with 3 minor revisions (see page 5). This document will be available on the BACB website in the fall of 2025.
Assessor Qualifications	Responsible Assessor: Must hold a BCaBA, BCBA, or BCBA-D certification and have completed the 8-hour supervision training	Responsible Assessor: No change
	Assistant Assessor: None	Assistant Assessor: Must hold an RBT certification or higher

RBT Maintenance Requirements		
	Current	2026
Ongoing Supervision		
Requirements per Supervisory Period	Supervised for a minimum of 5% of the hours spent providing behavior-analytic services in a calendar month; 2 face-to-face contacts; 1 individual; 1 observation	No change
Supervisor Qualifications	RBT Requirements Coordinator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must hold a BCBA or BCBA-D certification and have completed the 8-hour supervision training 	No change
	RBT Supervisor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must hold a BCaBA, BCBA, or BCBA-D certification and have completed the 8-hour supervision training; OR • Must be licensed in another behavioral health profession, meet certain requirements, and have completed the 8-hour supervision training 	RBT Supervisor: Must hold a BCaBA, BCBA, or BCBA-D certification and have completed the 8-hour supervision training
Recertification Requirements and Cycle		
Recertification Cycle	1 year	2 years
RBT Renewal Competency Assessment	Completed annually	Requirement eliminated, unless returning from voluntary inactive status
Professional Development	None	12 hours of in-service training, continuing education, and/or university coursework (see table on page 6)

Fees

The current RBT certification application fee is \$50 (plus \$45 paid to Pearson VUE for each examination appointment). The current RBT renewal application fee is \$35. These fees have remained the same since the RBT certification program launched in 2014. However, with the recertification cycle changing from 1 to 2 years in 2026, these fees required review. When discussing fee changes, the BACB Board of Directors strongly felt that fees under the new structure should remain budget neutral for the BACB to keep costs low for future RBTs and their organizations. Cost management might also be aided by the likely cost savings organizations would experience associated with lower administrative costs as a result of biennial recertification and the elimination of the Renewal Competency Assessment. The Board approved the following RBT fee structure effective January 1, 2026:

- RBT Certification Application: \$65 (plus the examination fee paid to Pearson VUE)
- RBT Recertification Application: \$50 every 2 years

Implementation Timeline

Those applying for RBT certification on or after January 1, 2026, will need to meet the 2026 eligibility requirements, pay the certification application fee effective in 2026, and take the RBT examination under the RBT Test Content Outline (3rd ed.).

RBT certificants who wish to recertify on or after January 1, 2026, will need to meet the now-current maintenance requirements (e.g., Renewal Competency Assessment) one last time before their 2-year recertification cycle begins and pay the recertification application fee effective in 2026. Once they are recertified, their 2-year recertification cycle will begin. If they wish to recertify again in 2028, they will need to meet the 2026 maintenance requirements (e.g., ongoing professional development).

Changes to the 2025 BCaBA Examination

As indicated in the [February 2022 BACB Newsletter](#), the BCaBA examination will be based on the [BCaBA Test Content Outline \(6th ed.\)](#) beginning January 1, 2025. With this upcoming change, the number of questions on the examination will increase from 160 (150 scored questions and 10 unscored pilot questions) to 175 (150 scored questions and 25 unscored pilot questions). The duration of the examination will remain 4 hours. The purpose of the increase in unscored pilot questions is to expedite pilot testing for the development of future examination content. The BACB worked with Pearson VUE to conduct an analysis to investigate the potential impact of increasing the BCaBA examination by 15 unscored pilot questions on candidates completing the examination. The analysis indicated that impact to candidates should be minimal.

Recent and Upcoming Changes to BACB Requirements

The following table summarizes important changes to certification requirements.

Effective Date	Area	Change	Source
July 1, 2023	Coursework from VCSs approved under Alternative Pathways	The BACB will no longer accept non-university coursework, including coursework from a Verified Course Sequence approved under an Alternative Pathway in which courses are taught outside of an accredited educational institution.	International Development & Support web page
September 29, 2023	BCBA Pathway 1 Update	Applicants who receive a master's degree from an APBA-accredited university program can apply under BCBA Pathway 1.	September 2023 Newsletter
January 1, 2024	BCBA and BCaBA Reinstatement Period	The BCBA and BCaBA reinstatement period for recertification will be reduced to 30 days.	September 2023 Newsletter
	BCBA and BCaBA Coursework Expiration Policy	A rolling 10-year expiration date will be placed on coursework submitted as part of a BCBA or BCaBA certification application.	March 2022 Newsletter
	RBT Initial Competency Assessment	The responsible assessor, assistant assessor(s), and RBT applicant must be employed at (or all have a contractual relationship with) the same organization where the client is receiving services. This requirement applies to the entire assessment.	September 2023 Newsletter

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.	Upcoming Changes to BACB Certification in Ontario
January 1, 2025	Multiple Certifications Policy	BACB certificants may only hold one BACB certification at a time.	September 2023 Newsletter
	BCBA Examinations	The BCBA examination will be based on the BCBA Test Content Outline (6th ed.).	February 2022 Newsletter
	BCaBA Examinations	The BCaBA examination will be based on the BCaBA Test Content Outline (6th ed.).	February 2022 Newsletter
January 1, 2026	BCBA and BCaBA Verified Coursework	All Pathway 2 certification applications will require that a VCS Coordinator 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.	September 2023 Newsletter
	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.	December 2023 Newsletter
	RBT Examination	The RBT examination will be based on the RBT Test Content Outline (3rd ed.).	December 2023 Newsletter
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.	Upcoming Changes to BACB Certification in Ontario
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.	March 2022 Newsletter
	BCaBA Eligibility and Maintenance Requirements	Revisions to core certification requirements, including degree, coursework, supervised fieldwork, continuing education, and ongoing supervision.	March 2022 Newsletter
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.	March 2022 Newsletter